THE VOICE OF GOD UNHEARD AND THE REASON WHY

JOHN A. D. ADAMS

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THE VOICE OF GOD UNHEARD

AND

THE REASON WHY

(SECOND EDITION)

BY

JNO. A. D. ADAMS

(OF DUNEDIN), BARRISTER-AT-LAW

AUTHOR OF

"THE CHURCH AS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE"

"My *sheep* HEAR *My Voice*."—Jno. x. 27.

"Ye are BECOME DULL OF HEARING."—Heb. v. 11, R.V.

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."—Heb. ii. 1.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the The Living God."—Heb. iii. 12.

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FOREWORD.

"To-day if ye will HEAR HIS VOICE, harden not your hearts."
—Heb. iii. 7, 8.

BEING deeply impressed with the importance of the subject discussed in this book, and appreciating the Scriptural way in which the author has dealt with that subject, I gladly embrace the opportunity of prefacing the volume with a few words of hearty commendation. Having derived profit and encouragement from the perusal of these pages, it is naturally my desire that others should be benefitted in like manner.

It is of the utmost importance that the people of God should be enabled to understand from the Scriptures just how, in these days of spiritual decline and departure from the faith, the God of heaven and earth is dealing with mankind in general, and specially with them that are of the household of faith. It is currently reported and believed among us that the God and Father of Jesus Christ has, in this era of the Church of the Living God, withdrawn Himself from direct actings and dealings with individuals, has purposely refrained from intervention (in ways termed "miraculous") with the course of events on earth, and has wrapped Himself in a peculiar "silence," quite in contrast with His revealed ways in past dispensations. If this be indeed the case, then the people of God should clearly understand it, should resign themselves to the "silence of God," and should not expect to hear His Voice or to see His Hand stretched out for the working of special deliverances on their behalf.

Mr. Adams has conducted a comprehensive enquiry into this subject. The results of that enquiry, which are given in the following pages, will surely be exceedingly helpful to all readers who truly desire to know and to do the Will of God. The author passes in review the entire course of God's dealings with mankind from the very beginning until now, noting all the prominent events that have a bearing upon the question under consideration, and clearly establishing, as his main propositions, *first*, that in *every* age (including "this present evil age") there were and are those to whom God has directly spoken or revealed Himself by special interventions of His power; and *second*, that those who have *heard His Voice* have been those who believed on Him as the Living God. Mr. Adams makes it very clear (as it seems to us) that God has not, in this age, withdrawn Himself from acting directly in behalf of those who put their trust in Him, but is just as prompt to hear and to respond to the prayer of faith as in any past age. The trouble is that the people of God are become "dull of hearing." Men speak to-day of the peculiar "silence of God," but "the HOLY GHOST says, To-day if ye will hear His Voice, *harden not your hearts.*"

The state of the members of the Church of God at the present time is such that the special lesson, and the special encouragement to faith, contained in this volume, are sorely needed. Therefore we pray that the Living and true God, to Whose glory it has been written, may bless it to the profit of many of His tried and perplexed people.

PHILIP MAURO.

Sturry, Kent, England.
Nov. 25. 1912.

PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

WHEN sending forth the second edition it is right to say that Sir Robert Anderson has omitted from the ninth edition of his book, *The Silence of God*, published last year, the preface to his seventh edition, which contained the sentence noted in my book, which says, "There is adequate proof that miracles occur in the present day." I do not stay to enquire why it is omitted—that is a matter for Sir Robert Anderson himself; I merely state the fact.

The effect, however, of that omission is another matter; for now, notwithstanding the truth that history and contemporary religious literature teem with the testimony of trustworthy, sane, and godly men and women to the actual occurrence of miracles within their own knowledge, Sir Robert Anderson's book appears without a word to indicate that their testimony is worth mentioning, not to say worth considering.

And this is so notwithstanding these words, which are Sir Robert Anderson's own: "The plain fact is that with all who believe the Bible the great difficulty respecting miracles is not their occurrence, but their absence" (*The Silence of God*, 9th ed., p. 24).

Sir Robert does indeed say that there are some extraordinary cures from serious illness which appear to be supported by evidence sufficient to establish their truth. But he accounts for these by hysteria and mimetic disease, and by the power of the mind over the body. Still he hesitates, and says that there may perhaps be some genuine miracles. Only may be!

In his preface to the ninth edition there are some words which deserve remark. They are: "God will yield nothing to the petulant demands of unbelief."

One is tempted to ask, Was it necessary to say this? Those who contend that God is not silent say that He still honours *the humble prayer of faith;* and no one is more ready than they to acknowledge God's absolute and perfect

Sovereignty. But they have found precious promises in God's Book, they have believed those promises, and have asked in accordance with them, and *therefore, of course, in accordance with His Will.* And they say that the Lord has given them their request.

But, further, should we not have a definition of "the petulant demands of unbelief"? Hezekiah's prayer for his life, which Sir Robert Anderson condemns, and which he almost says that God was wrong in granting, was not one of these petulant demands, for God yielded to it.

We are told that the promises contained in John xiv. 12, "were proved to be true in the Pentecostal dispensation, and that neither of them has been proved to be true in the Christian Church" (p. 205). Now, in view of the words about the petulant demands of unbelief, something should be said here.

MUST GOD PROVE *His words to be true?* Or when He has proved His promises to be true once, have we a right to call upon Him to prove them so again? Have we ever a right to ask God to prove His promises to be true before we will believe them?

God's way is always the very opposite of this. He demands, and has a right to expect, that we shall unhesitatingly accept and believe His promises; and when we do believe, and only to the believer, will He prove His promises to be true.

Do not these words betray a claim of right to demand that God will prove His promises to be true before we will believe them? And is not this just one of those petulant demands of unbelief to which God will yield nothing?

Again: we would like to know whether there are many "petulant demands of unbelief" being presented to God? Because if so, this alone may be sufficient to account for God's seeming silence to the majority.

In a matter like this, sounding phrases should not take the place of solid fact and true argument.

I desire to express my thanks to Mr. Philip Mauro for his kindly foreword.

Torquay.
December, 1912.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

CORRECT thoughts about God, so far as thoughts about Him are permitted to us, correct beliefs and opinions about His ways and His dealings with men, and correct knowledge of men's attitude towards God, are of the very utmost importance; and no amount of care and labour is too much to expend in the search for such correct thoughts, beliefs, opinions, and knowledge, and no opinion, however time-honoured or cherished, is too precious to be tried by God's touchstone and rejected if found incorrect. Nor is the statement of any man, however honoured, influential, or learned, unless he is inspired, sufficient foundation for any thought or belief or opinion about God or His ways or dealings with man. One authority alone appeals to man as sufficient, and that is the written Word of God. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times" (Psa. xii. 6, R.V.). In that precious storehouse of truth God has spoken to men all down the ages, and He speaks in and by it to-day; and the man who carefully studies that Word, with his mind fully surrendered to it, will learn, as David did, that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant" (Psa. xxv. 14).

Some years ago, while travelling, I met a lady who was much occupied with the sin and the consequent misery which exist among men, and she frequently asked the question, "Why does God permit all this?" which is just another form of the question, "Why is God silent?" I fear I was not then ready with the answer to her question, and that I had little to say in reply but the vague generality that God knows what is good for us, and we must believe that He always acts for the best, and what He does must be right. I was constrained to confess to my own heart, that this answer brought little satis-

faction and less comfort, and I also felt that, somehow, men were actually laying upon God the blame which should really, rest upon their own shoulders. I had seen in others' works the reply given nearly as I have indicated and heard good men speak in the same way—leaving the impression that God was the actor in all events, and that we could only explain His doings in that vague, indefinite way; but I was not satisfied. And now I would like to publish to all God's children the answer which seems to shine forth from the page of His own Book, that "God at the first endowed man with freedom of will and power of choice, and He has ever respected and He now respects, that freedom of will and power of choice"; and when man "turned every one to his own way" God "let them go." God has called to them to return to Him, and made every provision for their return, but He will not compel, and man's choice has resulted in the sin and attendant and consequent misery which we see.

It may be asked, and the question is a reasonable one, why this book is written so long after the appearance of the volume which it endeavours to answer. The reply is simple. Although aware of the existence of Sir Robert Anderson's book, I had never even seen it until a few months ago. Since then, I have had to find time for my task, in the midst of a multitude of professional, social, and other engagements.

Dunedin, 1908.

THE VOICE OF GOD UNHEARD
AND
THE REASON WHY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

MANY people have been exercised with the question, "Why is God silent with regard to the things which are happening on the earth?" and the majority of even thinking men seem to have taken it for granted that He is silent—and have echoed the question and seem to be waiting an answer. To these persons it may seem strange to say that at least it is not certain that God is silent, and that many thoughtful christians believe that a fitter question would be, "Is God silent?"

Until this latter question is settled in the affirmative, it is wise to delay answering the other question, "*Why* is He silent?"

Upon the assumption that God has ceased to express Himself upon the affairs of men, and that He is not now taking part in or controlling them, much has been said and eloquent passages have been written. We have been referred to the horrible massacres in Armenia, to the slaughter of God's messengers who have gone with the Gospel message to heathen lands, to the facts that saintly persons have suffered agonies in their death struggles; and that even little children suffer pain and distress, caused by sickness and disease; and we are told that these things are happening even although men are earnestly and faithfully crying to God for relief. One

eminent christian writer says, "I dare not say He *cannot* heal my child, but it is clear He *will* not."* And it is believed that these and many other facts of everyday occurrence prove that God is silent although He hears and knows it all; and the cry has been forced from many a heart, "Why does God permit all this evil?" and men want to know.

Pressed by these thoughts, some earnest and godly men have deemed that in view of the many promises contained in God's Word which seem to warrant the hope that He will interpose in such cases, it is necessary to discover some reason why He does not; and attempts have been made honestly, and, at least in the case cited above, ably and eloquently, to explain this seeming mystery, why God will not relieve. But although one is glad to recognise and respect the learning, diligence, ability, and skill displayed by Sir Robert Anderson, and the many brilliant passages and important truths which his book contains, as well as the splendid services which he has rendered to the world in others of his works, yet the fact that even the wisest are liable to err should not be forgotten; nor should it be considered presumptuous in an unknown writer, in a far-off corner of the world, to point out what he believes to be error, and to state what seems to him to be truth. And a careful and impartial study of Sir Robert Anderson's work has left no doubt whatever on my mind that his assumption is incorrect, and that his explanation is, in consequence, an error.

In the work referred to, the author says, "Heaven has been dumb for eighteen long centuries."† "When the testimony passed out from the narrow sphere of Judaism . . . that voice (the miraculous) died away for ever";‡ and again, "Ever since the days of the apostles, the silence of heaven has been unbroken";‖ and yet again, "From the days of the apostles to the present hour, the history of Christendom will be searched in vain for the record of a single public event to compel belief that there is a God at all."§ In his preface to the seventh edition, from which the above quotations have

* Sir Robert Anderson's *The Silence of God*, 7th Ed., p. 24.
† *The Silence of God*, 7th Ed., p. 16. ‡ Ibid., *supra* p. 17.
‖ Ibid. § Ibid., p. 18.

been made, Sir Robert Anderson says that he does not deny the occurrence of miracles during the present dispensation, but believes that "there is adequate proof that miracles occur in the present day." This relieves the position somewhat, but some may say that it is difficult to understand this statement in view of the assertions previously quoted. And an author can hardly complain if his readers, in case of conflict, prefer the body of his book to the preface when searching for the author's real opinions and intentions.

The opinions to which form has been given as above shown —without, however, the relieving statement—are held and expressed, and their burden has been crushingly felt by many, and they will be strengthened and their burden increased by the support they gain from the work of such a man as Sir Robert Anderson. Hence any effort, however feeble it may be, which has for its object the delivery of God's people from the burden of such an error, and the placing of God's dealings with men in a truer light, is justified.

CHAPTER II.

THE CASE STATED.

It is true, and no person can successfully deny it, that sin, wickedness and attendant miseries abound on the earth. Innocent victims of the sins of others suffer and are unrelieved. Christian men and women pray, and their prayers are unanswered. Wickedness triumphs—the wicked succeed even when their wickedness is open and unconcealed, and wicked men are seen occupying the high places of the land, while the godly are among the despised. Here and there, however, may be found what seem to be exceptions to the general rule. Sometimes the godly are held in honour, and sometimes they too grow rich, and sometimes God does hear prayer, and sometimes He does work miracles—at times—as has been suggested, but the general rule is that God does not give what is asked. Now someone will say, Is not this exactly what Sir Robert Anderson says in this connection? No; he says God *can* but *will* not. The only thing proved is that He *does* not. It may be that He wills to and is hindered. Can man then hinder God? Yes, certainly. Scripture is full of instances and proofs of this, and the truth is a most solemn one. Man can and does frustrate God's plans. At the beginning, God endowed man with a free will and power of choice, and to-day God Himself respects the freedom of will which He gave,* another most solemn truth.

It is also true that there has not been since the days of the apostles any public event to compel belief that there is a God

* I have pleasure in acknowledging my indebtedness for this pithy sentence to Mr. C. Inwood, who visited Dunedin a short while ago.

and it is open to doubt whether such an event was ever caused for such a purpose. There have been public events which proved that God's warnings were true, and that His promises were faithful, but there is no record of one whose object was to prove the existence of God. The *expulsion from Eden* was a public event, for all the world that then was saw and was interested in it. The Flood was a public event for the same reason. The confusion of tongues at Babel, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues of Egypt, the opening of the Red Sea, the healing of the waters of Marah, the smiting of the rock, the stopping of Jordan's waters, the destruction of Jericho, and others were public events, but none of them compelled belief, in any general or public sense. Some persons may have been led or forced to believe, by reason of the miracle, but the majority of those who witnessed or knew of them went on their way *as unbelieving as before.* God's dealings with Israel just about the conclusion of their wilderness wanderings, had, no doubt, a striking effect upon the surrounding nations, but they did not compel belief; rather they roused all the resistance of every such nation but one. The Gibeonites alone yielded to Israel and Israel's God. The other nations opposed.

Indeed, it does not appear ever to have been a part of God's plan to compel belief, and the words of our Lord Jesus Christ seem to apply to all the ages as much as to that in which He lived on the earth, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, *neither will they be persuaded* if one rise from the dead" (Luke xvi. 31). It would appear, then, that to expect God to cause a public event to occur in order to compel belief, is to go outside of God's methods, and to expect something which He never gives, and which certainly He never promised.

Sir Robert Anderson's opinion of the evidential value of miracles is fully sustained, and his words will well repay careful perusal.* Some miracles of a private or semi-private nature were wrought, having, perhaps, something of an evidentiary character. Moses' rod was turned into a serpent

* *The Silence of God*, chaps. iii. and iv.

when he doubted (Exod. iv. 3); Gideon's fleece was wetted or dried as he desired (Judges vi. 36-40); Manoah's offering was burned (Judges xiii. 20); Zachariah was made dumb for his unbelief (Luke i. 18-20); and there were others, but each one of them was a message from the Lord to an individual, and it can hardly be said that His purpose was to compel belief, although it must be admitted that both purpose and effect were to strengthen very weak faith. Yet there are two passages in the New Testament which seem to indicate that miracles were intended to serve for confirmation of the word preached. They are Mark xvi. 20, "The Lord working with them, and *confirming the word* with signs following"; and Heb. ii. 4, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own Will."

Miracles, it is admitted, have happened in this dispensation, and there is "proof that they occur at the present day," so Sir Robert Anderson admits in his preface, and "No one may limit what God will do in response to faith." This he also admits in the same place, and thanks are due to him for the admissions. But *God is no respecter of persons.* What He gives to one, He will give to all in the same circumstances and under the same conditions.

God is not limited to miracles in His intercourse with man. Mere non-interference in cases in which we think His interference is to be expected is not even evidence of His silence. He can, and does, speak in other ways than by miraculous acts. He spoke in the old time, and His Holy Spirit is upon earth in the Church to-day, and part of His gracious work is to reveal, to teach, to lead; and in many ways, unknown, it may be, to man, *He makes His power felt.* Man may refuse to hear, or, hearing, may refuse to obey, and he may become dull of hearing by reason of his very refusal to obey; and God may be speaking, though man may not hear or know it.

And now let us ask: "Is God silent now?" "Is He more silent now than He has always been?" Did "miracles cease when Judah rejected the Messiah"? And if so, did that cessation mean that God became silent then, or did "Heaven become dumb"?

The following pages will be devoted to an endeavour to answer these questions, and to prove that our God is not keeping silence to-day, but is speaking as He ever did speak to His faithful ones, although His Voice may be unheard now, as it has ever been, *by unbelievers or unbelieving believers;* for there are many who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and have laid hold on eternal life, but have not believed many of the things which the Lord has said. These cannot hear the Voice of the Lord when He speaks of the things concerning which they disbelieve Him. And in answering the questions, dispensations or eras of the world's history will be examined, and God's dealings with men in each of them reviewed—commencing with the very earliest.

CHAPTER III.

EDEN; OR, AS ONE HAS CALLED IT, "THE AGE OF INNOCENCE."*

VERY few, perhaps, of all the men and women who have read and thought of the incidents of Eden, have really seen the truth which is there taught, and thanks are due to the able writer already quoted for having mentioned it in his work already cited (page 119). It is generally believed, and the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism plainly states, that the Fall consisted in the "eating the forbidden fruit." Now, is this so? It is clear from the narrative that God talked with man, and it would even seem that He condescended to consult with him, if we may dare so to speak. He gave him control of the garden, He told him what fruits to eat, He called the animals and birds, etc., before Him that Adam might name them, and warned him that in the day wherein he should eat the fruit of one particular tree, he should surely die. *Adam then knew God's Voice.* He heard His command. He knew what the penalty was which God had attached to disobedience. There was no need for the Lord to repeat that command or warning. It was enough that He once for all should make known His mind on that subject, and the want of repetition gave no warrant or excuse for disbelief or disobedience. Even forgetfulness of that command, if that could be pleaded, would not exonerate from the consequences of disobedience. God had spoken—He had warned—disregard of His word *must produce the result* He

* George Soltau in his *Chart of the Plan of the Ages.*

had foretold. The Lord is entitled to be believed. Doubting His word provides no excuse for the doubter. When God speaks, His word brooks no disbelief or distrust, and the suggestion that His word will not or may not be found true must be spurned, or man will find himself at issue with God. How few there are even to-day who realise these solemn truths. It is not uncommon to find men speaking and acting as if God's word may be treated as man's may.

God had spoken, but one who hated God and man knew that the surest and speediest way to ruin God's handiwork was to set man at issue with God, and to insinuate first doubt and then disbelief of God's statements and warning; and that as soon as man had reached the point at which he disbelieved those statements and that warning, the gulf which the enemy desired to create between man and God had been created, and so he set himself to insinuate the doubt; and he knew, too, that if with the doubt he could instil a suspicion that God is selfish, harsh, arbitrary, or wishful to retain from man that which he might have, his work is done, *man's heart is estranged from God*, and disobedience is not only easy, but is the next, and an easier step, and this is exactly the method he adopted. Listen to the conversation.* The Serpent says, "Yea! hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" and the woman replies, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die," and the Serpent answers, with boldness now—he has obtained the woman's ear, she has listened, and now he makes use of his opportunity—"Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Yes, they knew the good already, then they would know evil likewise; but the Serpent did not put it that way. Notice the method. There is first the suspicion, the doubt of God's accuracy. He speaks as if in astonishment that God could have said any such thing. "Yea! hath God said?" One can almost fancy

* Gen. iii. *passim*.

he sees the expression of his features as he says it, and that expression of features conveys the idea, "Oh! surely He can't have said that—He can't mean that—You must have misunderstood Him"; or, "Well, if He said that . . . Hm!" and as he looks so surprised, he waits to see the effect of his look and his attitude upon the simple woman, and she feels the bad magnetism of his presence and the power of his look, and she speaks and says, ". . . of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Why did she add these words, "neither shall ye touch it?" God's warning contains no such words. Can it be that the very presence of the subtle Serpent had already so far interposed its baneful influence between God and her that she had failed to distinguish between truth and falsehood? Not without reason does Paul, writing under inspiration of God, say, "Evil companionships corrupt good manners." And now the Serpent* finds he has gained an advantage, and he presses home his attack, now boldly challenging God's truthfulness, "Ye shall not surely die." His tone of wonder in the early part of the interview had shaken the woman's confidence in God, and she was now a little prepared for the bolder effort; and when the enemy plainly states that what God had said was not true, his bold, confident assurance takes her by storm, and she is prepared to hear the rest, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." It is as if he had said, "God has a selfish object in saying this. He knows, none better, but I know too, though you don't, but I will enlighten you, He knows that when you eat that fruit, you shall be as gods. You will then rival Himself. He'll not be able to rule you and command you then. You'll be like gods, and you, too, will *know*. Now, why shouldn't you? God is selfishly wishing to keep you in ignorance and as a consequence in subjection. You should not submit to this. There is something for you. Take it; don't be afraid. God only threatens you to terrify you into

* I prefer to use the Scriptural phrase because some have objected to the statement that the Serpent was Satan, and so I leave that question untouched.

submission, and it is harsh and unkind in Him to try this. You have a right to this knowledge which He wishes to keep to Himself." Alas! we have heard men to-day saying things very nearly like this, and it is not too much to say that it is in the Serpent's words to Eve that they find the essence of the words in which they make their complaints.

And now the woman is completely conquered. She sees "that the tree was good for food . . . and a tree to be desired to *make wise*." She now, *disbelieving God*, believes the Serpent, and as a result, she is out of touch, out of communion with God, for communion with God in its full sweetness and power *depends upon belief of His word*, and it is forfeited in exact proportion as that word is doubted or disbelieved; and now, being out of communion with God, she is prepared to disobey Him. God's thoughts are no longer her thoughts, and she is now under the influence, almost the control, of the being who has supplanted God in her confidence. What a gulf now yawns between God and her! Before even the hand is raised in disobedience, her heart is estranged from God. His words now no longer control her, and His judgment is ignored. The heart which up till now had been God's throne has revolted, and its allegiance has been transferred to His enemy, and now the rest is not only easy, but natural. The *restraint* which belief of God's words created in her heart was withdrawn or cast away by her disbelief; and the desire to be made wise, which the Serpent had insinuated, now ruled her unhindered, and disobedience was the natural and necessary result. And then next in order of time, but not second in its consequences to the human race, after her own disobedience, she tempts the man. "She gave unto her husband, and he did eat." We do not know what arguments she used with him, or by what means she succeeded in obliterating his recollection of the Lord's warning, but he, too, must have disbelieved; or did he, in full consciousness of the awful facts, and in deliberate wilfulness, disobey? We are told that he was not deceived (1 Tim. ii. 14), Eve was deceived, and disbelieved God, and in consequence disobeyed; and Adam disobeyed because of Eve's previous disbelief, and the great ruin was completed. Man, made in the image of God, made

in fellowship with God, is now out of fellowship, *unable to hold communion* with Him because of the disbelieving spirit which now controls him; and from this day on, we find man readier to believe the Devil's lie than God's truth. And some will ask, "What was God doing all this time? Why did not He intervene and prevent this mischief?" One might answer with the Apostle Paul, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. ix. 20), but we have another answer besides this, and one which will bear repetition. God at the first endowed man with freedom of will and power of choice, and He always has respected, and He does now respect, that very freedom which He gave. Eve *could have chosen* to disbelieve the Serpent; Adam could have chosen to resist whatever blandishment Eve offered him; and both could have chosen to refuse to disobey God. *They chose otherwise.*

And now, if we had the right to bring God's actions in review before the bar of our judgment, we might ask, but let us ask with all reverence, can He now, after man has chosen his own course in defiance of His warning—can He now withdraw from His position, and out of pity for the sinner say that He will alter His purposes, and receive back into communion those who had *by their own choice forfeited it?* By what right, and upon what ground, could we expect this? Would not such action—and here again let us ask with the awe and reverence due to His holy Name—would not this affect His status as Ruler of the Universe? *He must rule.* He cannot weakly yield to man's disbelief and sin, nor to the weakness caused by such disbelief and sin. Men to-day recognise this principle, and act upon it. The one who disobeys a human law must pay the penalty, and no sense of pity for the offender, nay, nor for those who besides him will suffer through his punishment, can be allowed to stay the hand of justice.

And so man must be driven from Eden, from the place where fellowship with God had been enjoyed, out into the dark world. Yes, and more, much more than this; God had said, "In the day thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die." What does this mean? Some tell us that Adam did not die

in the day whereon he ate of the fruit of the tree. Did he not? God said he would. Are we not guilty of *the same sin as Eve* was when we say Adam did not die? There is a death which God calls death, but which man does not call by that name. We may not be able to define it, nor understand how one who is physically alive should be really dead, but what God said must be true, and man died, as God counts dying, on the day on which he ate the fruit of the tree; and so, in Eph. ii. 1, He, by the pen of the apostle, speaks of those who were dead in their trespasses and sins, and further on He says they were quickened—made alive. Shall we call this death "spiritual death"? Yes, but let us beware lest, in using language which may be too weak or not quite accurate, we limit the scope of God's words. He has not defined this death. We may not be able to do so. One thing is clear—by this death man became *incapable of understanding God*, and to this day, in the case of those who are not in Christ, that incapability continues.

Having chosen to disbelieve God, man became out of touch, out of communion with God by his own choice; and thus by his own choice he became incapable of the life that God would have had him live. Awful truth!

CHAPTER IV.

THE AGE OF CONSCIENCE*; OR, THE AGE OF FREEDOM, AS ANOTHER WRITER CALLS IT.†

Before the Flood.

AND now, labouring under this disability, man enters upon a new phase of existence, which has been called, "The Age of Conscience." Yes, there is still a conscience. God had not left Himself without a witness in man's own bosom as well as that mentioned by the apostle (Acts xiv. 17; Rom. i. 20, 21) Now, knowing God—for the recollection of the old communion was not taken away, and another trait of God's character had been made clear to him; His faithfulness to His Word—knowing God, but not having the sustaining, purifying, sanctifying influence of that lost communion, man is *again given a choice.* Men have in their pride and insubordination said that had God not forbidden the tree, man would not have coveted it, thus trying to cast the blame on God. Well, there is now no prohibiting command, no warning, nothing to compel goodness, only the sweet, gentle influence of that well-remembered fellowship, and the character of Him in Whose fellowship they had found peace and joy. Ah! yes, there was something else. There was ever with man the recollection of the terrible result of disbelief. Surely these recollections will be sufficiently potent to cause him to long for a likeness with Him Whom he had known, and to deter from a path of wickedness which must lead further away from Him; and once again a choice is before him. What will he choose?

* G. Soltau, *ubi sup.* † Pember's *Earth's Earliest Ages*, chap. viii.

This time we hear nothing of the Serpent. We know nothing further of his wily, seductive influence. Surely in the absence of this subtle enemy he will choose aright. *Will he? Did he?* Let the Holy Spirit, by the pen of His apostle, give the answer. Knowing God, "they glorified Him not as God .... but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened" (Rom. i. 21). And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind (Rom. i. 28). His choice is again made, and again it is against God; and the fatal choice is not long in making itself apparent. Brother rose up against his brother, and because God had respect to that brother's offering, slew him. What a choice was here! God had told Cain that if he did well, he too would be accepted, but his choice was made. He would not do well. His heart was filled with envy, and his brother's life must be taken to satisfy that dreadful passion, and the earth now, for the first time, drinks the blood of a martyr for God—a "witness," for that is the meaning of the word. Man has now gone *so far away from God*, that even a witness for Him is hateful. Again, a few verses further down in the sacred narrative, we find bloodshed. Lamech has slain a man (Gen. iv. 23). This time, however, the blood has been shed in self-defence, and so the world seems already to have begun the career of wickedness of which we are told lower down (Gen. vi. 5-12). "The wickedness of man was great in the earth," we are told, and "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth was filled with violence." "All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Yes, this was an age of freedom. There was no government. Every man might go in what way he pleased. Even the murderer, Cain, and the man-slayer, Lamech, go unpunished.* There was no the controlling power but conscience and the remembrance of former judgment of God. It might be called the Age of Anarchy; and now note the result. Isaiah says, "We have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. liii. 6). "Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God." "Even as they refused to have

* Vide Pember *ut sup.*

God in their knowledge, God gave them up." Does this mean *that He was silent?* Yes, as to man as a whole. *They* turned to their own way, they knew God, but did not glorify Him as God, they refused to have God in their knowledge, and God gave them up; and as He did then, He has done all down the ages and does to-day. In the beginning, God endowed man with freedom of will and power of choice, and He has always respected and does now respect that freedom which He gave.

But does this mean that God was silent as men talk of silence to-day? Was He dumb? To a superficial observer He would appear so, just as He appears to such an observer to-day. All these things went on unhindered. The weak suffered, as they do to-day, and the mighty wicked ruled, and God did not interfere. Why did He not? Have we any right to ask this question? Certainly not, but men do ask just such a question now, and we can without irreverence answer it. Nay, the Holy Spirit has already answered it. They turned to their own way. They refused to have God in their knowledge, and God gave them up; and as a superficial observer would have said, "God is silent. He is dumb to all our entreaties. He is deaf." But was it so? We find that "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. v. 22, 24); and "Noah walked with God" (Gen. vi. 9), and God talked with Noah and unfolded His purposes to him.

Even in the midst of all this awful wickedness and corruption there were some with whom God condescended to hold fellowship; there were some who knew what it was *to have sweet fellowship with God.* Who can tell all that is enfolded in those words, "Enoch walked with God"? It would seem that, shut in with God from the din and noise and bustle of the surrounding wickedness, his daily habit was to commune with Him of Whom the *world had become* almost ignorant, with regard to Whom they had become quite indifferent, about fellowship with Whom they knew nothing, and would have laughed had Enoch spoken of it. "How can there be a God?" they might have said; "see how wickedness runs riot. See how innocence remains unpro-

tected, and weakness, instead of being a claim for help, is a reason for attack. See how the worst of crimes go unpunished. If there be a God would He permit such things?" But Enoch knew and walked with God, and God took him away from the sights and sounds which grieved him, to an atmosphere for which his walk with God on earth had fitted him.* And Noah, too, walked with God, and to him the Lord unfolded His purposes, and to him was committed the work of saving his household and a stock of all that was necessary to replenish an earth shortly to be ruined by an act of the judgment of God, which, while it would not compel belief, would remain for ever in the memory of man as another proof that *God is not mocked.* We may conceive the look of astonishment and awe with which Noah received the information of God's intention, and the command to build the Ark; and we may conceive, too, the scorn and contempt with which the intimation of that intention was received by the world. The prudent, wise, middle-aged men would shake their heads and say, "Poor Noah! We always knew there was something the matter with his mental equilibrium. Now it is revealed. The world is going to be destroyed by a flood? Why, the thing is preposterous, impossible. A flood! What can that mean? Oh! a deluge of water? Ah, we have heard some dreamers speak of such a thing, but where is the water to come from? Water won't run up hill, and until it does, we're safe. Poor old Noah!" And the younger men, with that fine impudence born of their deeper ignorance, would turn away with a sneer and a ribald joke, calling the old man, of whose companionship they were not worthy, and who had known the joy of the most glorious companionship ever known, a silly old fool, or worse; and as the days went on and the Ark was being built on the dry ground, away from the sea, while as yet no sign was apparent of the coming deluge, one can almost fancy he hears the mocking remarks of both old and young, and the expressions of confirmed disbelief in any impending judgment. *But God had spoken to*

* It is remarkable that the only man of whom Scripture says that God took him, did not die. How we have changed this. When a man dies we say God has taken him. There is no authority for this.

Noah, and he knew the judgment was coming. God had not been silent. He had spoken to one who could hear. He could not speak to those who hardened their hearts against Him, whose ears had become dull of hearing (see Heb. v. 11).

But was not God speaking all the time? Was not every hammer stroke a repetition of the warning? Yes, and Noah's faithful work in continuing to build, notwithstanding the sneers and unbelief of those around him, was also a continuing repetition of the warning; but men would not hear, and so the flood must descend. Once again God must prove to man that He is not mocked

CHAPTER V.

THE AGE OF CONSCIENCE OR FREEDOM.

After the Flood.

AFTER this terrible cataclysm man has a fresh start, but with such an awful lesson now behind him. No doubt Noah had taught his family the prior history of the race, and now there is added to that history the story of a fact within their own knowledge, a story of the awful righteousness of God; and once again man is given the opportunity to choose. Noah had walked with God. His life was before his sons as a continued example of godliness, and the terrible fate of the rest of the world was fresh in their memories as the result of ungodliness. Man shall choose. Surely he shall choose for God this time. Alas! No, again he chooses *against God.* The sacred writings say little of the course of the world between the Deluge and Babel, and we are sent to other sources for information on this point, but that information is not wanting.

Not very long after this most signal manifestation of the wrath of God against sin, almost before the aged patriarch had ceased to warn men, sin of a new kind showed itself among them. Men gathered themselves into families and communities, and a certain rude kind of government was established. No longer could every man do just what seemed good in his own eyes. God Himself had established one law—not a full detailed code, but, as it were, just something to show that restraint was necessary. Now no longer can blood cry in vain for vengeance, for God had said He would require it (Gen. ix. 5, 6) at the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother would He require the life of

man; nor do we find that violence covered the earth as before. It would almost seem that for a time, at least, after the Deluge, men had retained the lesson, and the remembrance of God's judgment had restrained them.* And so our next awful fact is not a scene of violence, but "Babel."

Scripture tells us little directly about the causes which led up to the attempt to reach heaven by means of a tower, or on the object which man thought to gain thereby. But here secular history comes to our aid. Before we invoke it, however, one glance again at the sacred volume will throw light on the subject. Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah, grandson of Ham, we are told, became a mighty hunter before the Lord. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel (Gen. x.), Babylon. This word is suggestive. With one leap, we seem to find ourselves away from the scenes of early history, and in the scenes of the end, when "Babylon the Great," "*Mystery Babylon*," is presented to our eyes. But, it may be asked, what light can be thrown on the doings of men in the long past ages, by the mere similarity or identity of the name of the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom and that spiritual apostasy spoken of in Revelation? And the answer is—Much, very much, for Babylon is not merely the name of a city—mighty, populous, and rich—but is also the designation of one of the most *impudent attempts on man's part* to set at nought the authority, and to usurp the place, of God; and Nimrod was the man by whom, and Babel or Babylon was the place where, this attempt was begun—only begun. The attempt has continued in various ways, and by various agencies, from that date all through the ages till to-day; and it is destined to continue until the shout shall be heard by-and-by, "Babylon the Great is fallen—is fallen." It would be altogether beyond the scope of this essay to deal at any length with the matter just mentioned, but a little time may be devoted to its study in order to show how completely man again chose *to refuse to have God* in his knowledge.

* I pass by the suggestion that Noah had by repeated indulgence in wine become a habitual drunkard. More likely he was overcome at the first through his inexperience. We do not read of any repetition of the offence.

It seems incredible that, within so short a time after the voice of the venerable patriarch, Noah, had ceased to tell the story of the Deluge, men should have altogether forgotten the fact and its cause, by the time Nimrod was born; or that Nimrod himself should not have been told the story during his childhood; and we are justified in believing that any act of his which aimed at subverting God's authority, or at establishing his own authority regardless of the Lord's, must have been done *with knowledge and intention* on his part.

We find, then, in Scripture that Nimrod began to be a mighty one on the earth, and that he was a mighty hunter before the Lord (Gen. x. *passim*). Just what the words "before the Lord" may mean is doubtful, but they mean something which perhaps the sequel may elucidate. Next we find that the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, etc. (Gen. x. 10). From being a hunter, he has become a king and his kingdom was a progressive one. Babel and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar, appear to have successively owned his sway. The next verse of the tenth chapter of Genesis is, in the English rendering, a little obscure. One able and very learned writer gives quite a different reading* and says that the word "Asshur" in that passage means, not a man's name, but a verb, and that the passage should read, "Out of that land he went forth, being made strong, and builded Nineveh." It appears, then, that Nimrod was actuated by a lust for universal conquest. The rights of other nations and other men were as nothing to him. And now let us notice the beginning of his kingdom, "Babel," a tower built with the intention of scaling the heavens—for what purpose? That this was not an effort without a purpose need scarcely be said, and that the purpose was offensive to God is clear from the fact that He thought it well to frustrate that purpose, saying, "Now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do" (Gen. xi. 6). Perhaps men thought that if they had this tower as a place of refuge in case God should again visit the earth with a flood, they could take shelter therein, and so they could defy Him. True, God

* Hislop's *The Two Babylons*, p. 39.

had said He would not do so, but when men are out of touch with God, His word of mercy or of judgment *weighs little or nothing with them*; and as they had no intention of serving the Lord, they may have thought it wise to take precautions. We have heard of such efforts and such reasons even to-day. Instead of yielding to the loving Voice of Jehovah, Whose whole purpose towards men is to bless them, they prefer to shelter themselves from Him as if His attitude towards them was one of wrath only. In the present state of our information, we can only guess at the object they expected to gain, and perhaps guesses may mislead, and it will be well to let subsequent events throw what light they can on the action and its purpose.

Here, then, secular history can be called in to help, and from it we find that in addition to being a cruel, ambitious ruler, dominated by a lust for power, which led him to annex territory after territory, he was party to the founding by his wife, Semiramis—if he was not himself principal in the matter—of a system of religion which substituted Nimrod himself, and his wife and son, for the Triune God.*

It is also said that even before Nimrod became mighty, the terrible apostasy had already commenced, and that Cush, his father, the son of Ham, had begun to lead men away from God into the worship of other beings than God, and Semiramis herself was worshipped as a goddess; and a most complete system which has lasted through the ages—was spoken of by the prophets and casts its baneful influence over the world to-day—was fully established before Nimrod's death; and it was not long before it overspread the whole inhabited world. God the Creator of the world *was ignored.* They did not wish—they refused to have—God in their knowledge, and they filled the place which was His, with others. But while they were doing this, there was a consciousness (or was it a memory?) that after all God was not blotted out. No, it takes long to silence entirely the conscience which He has placed in man's breast, and that conscience, when men will not yield to its warnings, creates terror, and makes man feel

* *The Two Babylons*, p. 34, *et seq.*, and the authorities there collected.

that there is some power, seen or unseen, which is not friendly to him, and which may yet take means to injure him, and a refuge from this power seems a necessity. This conscience is surely the Voice of God still speaking. Even though conscience speaks ignorantly by reason of the darkness of its environment, still it is the Voice of God, though perverted.

But there is yet another purpose which may have been the true one, and this is the purpose which they avowed. "Let us make a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." A name for themselves and a rallying place. They had begun to learn the value of union, but it was a union without God—maybe against God.

And the Lord Jehovah permitted all this! Was He silent all the time? Surely not. History speaks—man's memory speaks. The story of the Flood must have been, among even these men, an oft told tale. Eden, too, was not forgotten. Can God be said to be silent when His mighty acts have been done so recently among men? Must He repeat His words and warnings to men who will not hear? Shall we judge Him silent, because He does not constantly repeat His laws and His judgments?

But now God speaks again. The language of men is confused, and the very thing they fear overtakes them. They are scattered over the face of the earth—another proof that *He was not silent.*

CHAPTER VI.

ABRAHAM'S TIME.

AND shortly after this, while men were still steeped in idolatry—a sin which God has condemned with the utmost severity—God again speaks. This time, however, the great multitude knows nothing of His speech. He calls Abram out from his native land, from his father's house, and from the dols among whom he was living; and again a man is found upon the earth who walks with God, who believes God, and is called the friend of God. But while this is so, the great world goes on in idolatry, *not knowing* that God was actually speaking to one man on the earth.

It does not appear that anyone heard God's call to Abram but Abram himself, nor that anyone knew of it save himself and those to whom he communicated it. To the whole outside world God was silent, yet His call to Abram was a momentous one for the world. It meant God's choice out of the world of one man who, and whose seed, should, if they remained faithful, be the channels of blessing. But now God chooses; man had chosen before, and continued to choose, and God permits their choice, almost as it were acquiesces in it, or, as the apostle puts it, God gave them up. This will be found to be always God's way. If men will come into line with Him, He has riches of blessing for them; if they will not, *He will not force* His blessings upon them. Again let the word be repeated, "At the beginning God endowed man with freedom of will, and power of choice, and He has always respected and He does now respect that freedom of will and choice." And shall man complain if God, too, makes His choice, leaving man to his?

And Abram comes and leaves his well-loved, beautiful, fertile valleys and plains, to go to a land whose very

locality he does not know. God said, "Unto a land that I will show thee" (Gen. xii. 1). How unlike God's own people to-day! They want to know where they are going, and the way, and the means, all before they start. In things of men's appointing, they are right, but when God speaks?—Abram "went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. xi. 8). God had promised him that He would make of him a great nation, bless him, make his name great and make him a blessing, *and that was enough for him*, and he went as the Lord had spoken (Gen. xii. 2). Now God has found another man to whom He can speak—one who will listen, hear, and obey—and to this man He does speak and to him He makes a promise; and note how Abram treats the promise. Year after year passes away, and not only does Abram not get possession of the land promised to him, but he has not any seed to inherit it. Yet the word is, "unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. xii. 7). Abram grows old; his servants, his flocks, and his herds increase, but he has no son. Does it not appear as if God had forgotten His promise? How can He give the land to Abram and his seed when as yet he has no seed? Again and again the Lord speaks to him, but that on which we may believe his heart was set came not. Nay! that which was clearly *included in the promise* came not. Who among us could have blamed Abram if he had said that God had become silent on that point, and if he had concluded that he had been mistaken, that God did not mean what He had said? No, we might not have been able to blame him; our own unbelief would prevent that, but see what the result would have been had Abram spoken so. It is to the man who believes God's word, not to the man who explains it away, that the blessing comes. But Abram still *believed, trusted, and waited*, and the reward came and God's word was proved true in the very terms in which the promise was framed, and more abundantly; for when Abram was ninety years old and nine God came to him, and told him not merely that he should have a son, but that He had made him a father of a multitude of nations (Gen. xvii. 4); and afterwards he is known not as Abram but Abraham. Again, God spoke to Abraham. This time He

speaks about others. While He has been holding communion with Abraham, and making it quite clear that God does speak with men, what is happening in the world? Outside of the family of Abraham, there is no sign that God is speaking or can speak. He is silent. Yes, with an awful silence, God lets man go on *in the way he has chosen*, out of communion with God, away from God, heeding not, knowing not that all this while God has been speaking, ay! and lately has spoken about him. Even Lot, a righteous man (2 Pet. ii. 7), was unaware of the fact that the Lord had been speaking of him, and had purposed to save him from the effects of the wickedness of Sodom. Lot lived among a people estranged from God and his own spiritual discernment had suffered in consequence. Although Sodom knew not, although Lot knew not, up there on the hills looking down upon the guilty city, a conversation was being held which would have startled the men of Sodom and even Lot himself (Gen. xviii. 17, *ad fin.*), had they or he heard it.

But God was then about to speak in a way which would command attention even by the world which had chosen, if not to ignore Him, to defy Him; and a judgment was about to fall which would be remembered as long as man lives on the earth; for the spot on which it should fall would be marked out in such a manner as never to be forgotten. Fire and brimstone from the heavens must burn up the cities; and the waters of the Dead Sea were destined to cover the places where they were; and prevent the eye of man ever resting on their ruined sites. Ah, yes! *God keeps on speaking* to those who will listen, hear, and obey Him, and He makes their fellowship with Him sweet, but when He must speak to those who have chosen against Him, His Voice may be expected to be like the thunder.

And now will the fire and brimstone from heaven compel belief? Will those who saw, but did not suffer, the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, believe in a God? Surely this awful visitation will open their eyes, and men will now fear God and obey and worship Him. Alas, no! idolatry in all its varied forms overspreads the earth, and men persistently seek after other gods than Jehovah.

CHAPTER VII.

ABRAHAM TO MOSES.

We have reached a stage in man's history when another complete change appears. Excepting Melchizedek alone, no one is known to have had fellowship with God at that time, save the family of one man—the called out one, Abraham; and as to Melchizedek the information at our disposal is so meagre that even helped as we are by the reference to him in Heb. vii. 1-3, we are unable to say who he was. King of Salem, that is King of Peace. Priest of the Most High God (Gen. xiv. 18). His name, we are told in Hebrews, was by interpretation, King of Righteousness. More about him we have no means of knowing, except the reference in the hundred and tenth psalm, where the words occur, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedeck." We may speculate about his identity, but speculation will not elucidate.

To Abraham alone and his family does God seem to reveal Himself; to him and them alone does He break silence. Isaac, the head of that family after Abraham himself, was the child of promise, the one on whose behalf God set aside the provision which natural wisdom had suggested, for perpetuating the name and lineage of Abraham, born when Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah ninety, contrary to all human power of expectation, but in fulfilment of the promise of God.

This, then, is a dispensation begun by the *direct and miraculous intervention of God.* The calling of Abram and leading him away from his home, his father's house, and almost all he held dear, guiding him infallibly across the desert to the land which He had promised to show him, ay, and the giving to him that calm, restful confidence in the faithfulness of the God Who had called and led him; all this was miraculous. And the giving him the son in his extreme age, when Sarah,

too, had ceased to expect such a joy (see Gen. xviii. 11), was also miraculous. We are almost inclined to say, "No wonder God counted it to Abram for righteousness that he believed His word (Gen. xv. 6) in those circumstances." *But should we say so?* Should not the normal attitude of the christian at least be an implicit, even childlike, belief of God's word? And wonderful as it may seem to us, the attitude of Abram was the only proper one, and the grace and condescension was on God's side when He counted it to Abram for righteousness. How wonderful, yet how sweet, is the story. It would almost seem that the Great Truth-speaking Jehovah has grown tired of so much unbelief, based perhaps upon very reasonable grounds—unbelief of His word, and belief of the opposite, because the opposite seems so probable. He has grown so tired of men turning away from His word that He is glad to find one who is willing to trust Him; not to trust Him in that vague general sense, so much commended and recommended now, which says, "Ah, well, I cannot take the promises of God as made to me. They belong to some others, but I know that, whatever happens, God sees all and will make good come out of it all." No, Abram *built his hopes on the promise*, and God counted that to him for righteousness, and God fulfilled that promise to the letter, although to human nature it not only seemed, but was, impossible (Rom. iv. 3, 18, 20, 22). God has a right to expect such faith, and He will honour it where He finds it.

But to return. Not only is Isaac the child of promise and the fulfilment of God's promise: he is the one given back from the dead. In a figure, it is true, but to Abraham how really was he given back from the dead. Abraham's obedient heart had no thought of faltering in the performance of God's command. He was going on to the end. True, he believed God was able to raise Isaac up again from the dead, for he had God's word that in Isaac was the covenant to be fulfilled, and hence with an unfaltering obedience, he goes forward, and Isaac was to him as already dead, and God gave him back to him and showed him where to find a substitute for sacrifice.

Now, with a history like this, a history which no doubt would be repeated and repeated, over and over by father to

son; with such examples of obedience and trust, and such instances of God's faithfulness, what should we expect, *what has God a right* to expect from this family? Surely that they will abide in touch with the God of their fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and continue to believe and obey Him. Surely all has been done and said and given, short of coercion, to predispose them to trust and obey that God. Can He be expected to do more? And if this family or their descendants ever find themselves beginning to backslide from God, if they find themselves wandering from Him, will they not review these past things, and hurry back to the place in His fellowship from which they are slipping away? They will remember, will they not, the national promises and the warnings too, and the conditions of the promises? But they did not; Esau sold his birthright. It was of less value to him than the fragrant delicacy which his brother had prepared. He was hungry, and he despised his birthright when the question was between it and a savoury meal just then ready. And what a birthright! That of the eldest son of a nation which God had called forth, and promised to bless with His own blessing; which He had promised to make a mighty nation. It is idle in this connection to say that God intended, foreknew, that Esau would do this. Esau knew nothing of God's foreknowledge, and his act of despising or undervaluing his birthright *was his own act.*

Jacob's sons must have often saddened their father's heart, for their reputation is an unenviable one, and when they sold their brother Joseph into Egypt, they seem just to have completed the sum of their iniquities. Did they totally forget all their previous history? It seems so. At any rate, there was no fear of God before their eyes, and no trust in God or knowledge of Him in their hearts; and if in after years their posterity found themselves in bondage, in a strange land, and still out of communion with God, they could not with any reason complain and say, "Why does God permit this evil?" Man had been again given his choice, and this time with perhaps greater inducements to choose aright than ever before, and he has chosen again; against God—and the bondage of Egypt was the result.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOSES TO JOSHUA.

But God heard the cry of downtrodden Israel. Although Israel had forgotten Him, and His power and His promises, He had not forgotten, and He sends Moses to deliver them and bring them out from under Pharaoh's power; and with a mighty Hand, a stretched out Arm, He leads them out; not, however, before He has shown His power in judgment on Pharaoh, and his land and his hosts. Those ten plagues with which He plagued Pharaoh and his land were enough to fix in Israel's mind God's mercy, and His grace, and His power, had Israel been willing to remember. And the last one, when the firstborn of all Egypt perished, and the destroyer was prevented from entering the houses on whose doorposts and lintels the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled, must have left an impression on the minds of the delivered ones which was well nigh indelible. *Alas! not quite indelible*, for it must have been forgotten soon. But miracle after miracle, wonder after wonder, is wrought for Israel now. Even their hard-hearted taskmasters, the Egyptians, were glad to give them gifts and to hurry them away; and when Pharaoh, relieved from the immediate pressure of the Hand of God, changed his mind and endeavoured to bring back God's people into slavery, see with what a mighty Hand God intervenes to deliver them. Yet, Israel has forgotten already. When Pharaoh was seen coming after them, *all God's past deeds* and faithfulness are forgotten, and Israel craves to be let alone, to go back and serve the Egyptians; and Israel did this, although the Presence of the Lord was proved to be with them, by the pillar of fire by night, and of cloud by day. How readily and easily men forget. They forget the chains and the lash of the tyrant, and their distress under his power,

and they forget the mightiness and faithfulness and kindness of God, although here is just one of the points on which God has a controversy with man. They forget God! And they forget, too, that the Serpent has lied to them about God; but the lie which the Serpent told them they remember.

And now see how God does. He opens up the Red Sea—divides it, so that the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left,* and He protects them by His pillar of cloud and of fire until every one of the men, women, and children, and their flocks and herds, had passed over. He had just heard their murmurings when they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" etc. (Exod. xiv. 11, 12), and yet in tender kindness He overlooks their faithlessness and perverseness, and leads them out with a high Hand and

* Exod. xiv. 22, 29. It is a matter of deep regret that christian men—men of learning, ability and power, whose works otherwise have been of great service to christians—should have lent their influence to the infidel rationalist by accepting and supporting a theory which robs this act of God of its supernatural character. It is said by one author, Sir J. W. Dawson, *Eden Lost and Won*, p. 150, that the dividing of the Red Sea was caused by the strong wind driving out the ebb-tide. But let us examine this. First, then, the wind spoken of in the narrative is an east wind. Now, an east wind would blow up the Red Sea and drive its waters higher upon the land. Second, the waters were a wall on the right hand *and on the left*. If it had been merely an abnormally low tide there would have been a wall only on the right hand. Third, Scripture speaks of this act again and again as God dividing the waters. Fourth, God said to Moses, "Lift thou up thy rod, stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it." This was no ebb-tide, but a dividing, some of the water being kept up on the left hand as well as heaped up on the right. The sacred narrative says the waters were a wall on each side. If there had merely been a driving out of the ebb-tide, the left hand would have been unprotected and Pharaoh and his hosts could have attacked Israel on the left. Again, if it had only been an ebb-tide, as the tide returns twice in little more than twenty-four hours, there would have been a reflux of the tide long before all the hosts of Israel with their wives and little ones, and the flocks and herds, could have crossed. There are other fatal objections to the theory of an ebb-tide, but the chief ones are that the theory contradicts the plain statement, and by attempting even in a slight degree to attribute the occurrence to natural causes, one is in danger of robbing it of the character of a Divine work. True, the inspired history says that the Lord caused the sea to go—not back, that is an addition—simply to go by a strong east wind. All that night, not merely during the ebb of the tide, nor was it driven in the course of the ebb, an east wind would drive the waters up on the banks, and a north-east wind would cut across them. It is far better to leave the story as we find it. God divided the waters.

a stretched-out Arm. Hearken and hear how they shout and sing to Jehovah their thanksgiving and praise for this mighty deliverance (Exod. xv.). Egypt's bondage is gone for ever. God's people are free.

Surely never more after this will Israel doubt God. Has He not promised that He will bring them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, that He would rid them of their bondage, and that He would redeem them with a stretched out Arm and with great judgments, and that He would bring them in unto the land concerning which He had sworn to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and did He not say that He would give it to them for a heritage? (Exod. vi. 6, 8). And have they not seen His mighty Arm outstretched already? Never after this, surely, will they murmur or doubt God! Yes, truly we should have thought so, but the real story is altogether different from our expectations. *Murmuring after murmuring*, disbelief upon disbelief, mark their path as they journey, till we hear these words, "Would to God we had died by the Hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness; to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exod. xvi. 3). Again the Lord supplies them, not according to their needs merely, but their desires. He gives them bread, water, and flesh, and all the while He keeps before their eyes the visible sign of His Presence with them. More than ever was given to man before is given to Israel now, to predispose to, and induce belief in, God, and not only belief in God as a historical or theological entity, someone to believe about, but a real, living, present God Who delivers, Who shields and guards, and provides and guides. Yet, notwithstanding all this, they refuse to believe Him. He had said He would bring them in unto the land. They said they were about to be killed with hunger, and again, later on, with thirst (Exod. xvii. 3), and still later that they would fall by the sword (Num. xiv. 3).

Space and patience alike would fail if we traced every step of the way by which the Lord led His people, and the return they made to Him. Horeb and its waters, the

victory at Rephidim, the scenes of Sinai, the Golden Calf made and worshipped almost under the very fires and lightnings of Sinai, and almost before its thunderings had ceased to echo around their tents, and their refusal to go up into the land when they were commanded (see Deut. i.). The same tale is told by all. Men will not listen and hear and obey God, and they therefore cannot hear His Voice even when He speaks. Yet there were those who knew God's Voice, even in the midst of these backslidings and rebellions. Moses knew when the Lord spoke. Indeed, to him was given the singular honour of speaking to God face to face. It is true that Moses was the specially chosen and appointed mediator, and therefore we expect that he will be honoured so. Yet the fact remains, God did speak to him, and it is also true that God spoke through him to Israel, but *Israel failed to recognise* God's Voice even when Moses spoke. They always blamed Moses, always spoke as if he were the one who had led them out. They said, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Exod. xxxii. 1), and all this time, the pillar of cloud and of fire remained to tell them that God was in the very midst of them.

A solemn lesson is taught us in the rebuke and punishment of Moses for rebelling against the Lord at the waters of Meribah (Num. xxvii. 12-14). The land to which for forty years he had been engaged in leading the people, and which he greatly desired to enter, he was only permitted to see, because he had rebelled against the commandment of the Lord. How simple was the act as men would judge it. Once in all those long forty years, he lost his temper (Num. xx. 10-12). During all those trials which he had suffered at the hands of the people, he had maintained the evenness of his temper, so that he was called "meek" above all the men on the earth (Num. xii. 3), but at the last their murmurings overcame him, and he smote the rock, when the Lord had said speak to it, and he gave utterance to ill-advised words. "What a trifle," men will say. Others would say it was only what might have been expected. Yes, if there had been nothing but ill-advised words, even harsh words. There

was a time when he even dashed to the ground the tables of stone on which God had written the ten commandments, and broke them in his anger, and the Lord did not rebuke him for that (Exod. xxxii. 19). The fault in the latter case was not the anger nor the form of his words, but the essence of them—"Hear now, ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" *We*, Moses and Aaron? Or was it Moses and God? Or perhaps God first and Moses second? God says, "Because ye believed not in *Me* to sanctify *Me* in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Num. xx. 12). It must not be God first and Moses second. *It must be God and God only*, man at most but the channel.

And this truth explains much of Israel's failure, and it will explain much, if not all, of the failure of christian men and women to-day. In every work for God, man puts self into prominence. It may be God first, but self comes in prominently next. And he disobeyed. The Lord said, "speak," and he smote. Many will perhaps think this is quibbling, but many a blessing is lost through men doing things in their own way instead of doing them in God's way. Many christian leaders would rather see their disciples adopting their ideas and words, and doing things in the way they advise, than see them carefully studying the Scriptures to see whether these things are so. And if the Lord was angry with Moses and Aaron for smiting when He said speak, if He rebuked them and deprived them of an anticipated joy for these things, it is not unreasonable to believe that christian men and women are just now deprived of blessings which they would otherwise enjoy; by reason of their self-will and refusal to yield to the Will of the Lord. It may well be that many a good work for God and humanity is hindered by our self-trust—not to say self-will. For a moment, Moses was out of touch with God, and he lost what was the hope of his life. If we are out of touch with the same Lord, we, too, shall lose.

And all this time, the world was ignorant of God. Outside the immediate vicinity of Israel, idolatry was rife. Men knew not God. To them, He was silent. That is to say, they did not hear His Voice, nor would they have known it if they

had heard it. They had surrounded themselves with gods of their own choice, and so steeped were men in idolatry that they thought of Jehovah only as they thought of their own gods, and the fact of God *being in the very midst of Israel* had no effect on the people in their vicinity. They fought against the Lord and His people. And even in Israel, outside the narrow circle of Moses and Aaron and their families, there was no real knowledge of God. To the vast multitude He was silent. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their company, would not have dared to do and speak as they did, if they had known the Voice of the Lord (Num. xvi. 3). Once again the same truth unfolds itself. Although to the great multitude God seems to be silent, yet there are those who are willing to listen for His Voice, and hearing it, to obey, and *to them He is not silent.*

CHAPTER IX.

THE TIMES OF JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES.

Victory.

LIKE other eras, the era of Joshua opens with a manifestation of God. Moses has died. Joshua now assumes the leadership, and at the very outset the Lord speaks to him and gives him promises, and encouragement, and commands (Joshua i. 1-9), and then He begins to magnify him in the sight of all Israel "that they may know that as He was with Moses, so He would be with him" (Joshua iii. 7). Joshua accepts the promises and acts on them, and his first act is to call the people and tell them God's word, saying, "Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you, etc." (verse 10). It would seem that all the lessons they had received up till now had not taught them this truth. Even the fiery and cloudy pillar which accompanied them all the way had failed to teach them. All the mighty doings of the Lord in and all through the wilderness journey had failed. No doubt if anyone had asked an Israelite whether or not God, the living God, was among them, he would have said, "Oh, yes," and have pointed to the fiery pillar in proof of it, but when the test of his knowledge came, the man who thus spoke would have been found among those who acted in the same manner as they would have done if He had not been among them. But now Joshua says that Israel shall *know* that the living God is among them, and so he sets them in the order of the march, but the priests of the Lord must take the lead, carrying the most sacred article of all the furniture of the tabernacle (Joshua iii. 13, 15, 16). And as they that bare the Ark were come into Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the Ark were dipped in the brink of the water, then God showed Himself mighty, and the

waters stood and rose up upon a heap, and the lower waters ran on in their course, leaving a dry river bed for Israel to pass over.* While the people are passing over, so calm and confident were the priests, who bare the precious Ark of the Covenant, that they stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, until all the people *were passed clean over.*

Never was an era commenced under more favourable auspices than this. Never was God's mighty Hand more clearly visible. This time it was not one man, nor a few men, who saw the miracle. It was the whole host of Israel, and it was not as at the passing of the Red Sea, where a nation of slaves had suddenly gained their liberty, and were being hurried out from the land of bondage almost before they were able to realise what had happened to them, with the recollection of Pharaoh's taskmasters vividly before them, and the debasing experience of ages of bondage, and all their inexperience of God's leading. Now it was a race of men who had been journeying for many years, having in view the very act which has now been accomplished—free men accustomed to hear and speak of God, and led and guided partially at least by the Lord; and it is at the command of the Lord, and calmly and deliberately, that they cross, all the while having time and opportunity to mark how the mighty God, the living God, can deliver. Will this deliverance, will this mighty act, ever be effaced from their memory? The nations round about them, the kings of the Amorites and the kings of the Canaanites, heard of this wonderful act of God, and their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of

* There is little scope here for the fertile imagination of man to search for and find a natural explanation of this occurrence. The words are plain, although the plainness of the words is no barrier to the man who wants to keep out the idea of, and prevent our trust in, a living God. Still, the plainness of the statement will make the honest reader of the Scripture pause before he gives heed to the charmer who would charm away the supernatural. Jordan overflowed its banks at that time. There was no drought, but, on the contrary, there was a flood, and this time there is no wind; at any rate, there is no mention of any wind, and we are justified in saying there was none, and the priests' feet were actually in the water before they receded, and then the waters stood and rose up upon a heap. Now, surely Israel and the modern wise men who would relieve doubt and make belief of God's Word easy by eliminating the supernatural element, will see that this is none other than the Hand of Jehovah.

the children of Israel (Joshua v. 1, 2). But this did not last long, as the sequel will show. Even this act did not compel belief, although the Lord had laid the fear and the dread of Israel upon the nations (Deut. xi. 25).

And now Israel is OVER JORDAN in the Promised Land, in the land of which the Lord had said that He had given them every place whereon the sole of their foot should tread, the land which had been given to their fathers centuries ago, the land in which they were promised victory. How the hearts of Israel must have burned within them when they realised that they had actually reached and entered that long-thought-of, much-desired land. How much searching of heart there must have been, as they reviewed the path through the wilderness by which the Lord had led them, when they recalled all the incidents of that long weary journey as they had been so graphically related to them by Moses before his death (Deut. i., ii., iii., iv.), and how many resolutions must have been made to follow the Lord fully from this day forward. The very fact that they had now *actually gained and taken possession of* their patrimony, and that the Lord had so manifestly led them thereinto in spite of their wilfulness and disobedience, must have seemed to them then sufficient to prevent them from ever again refusing to listen to the Lord, and hear Him, and obey.

Yes, the crossing of the Jordan was a public event, a glorious sequel to the long desert wanderings, an event which spoke in a voice mightier and more convincing than any event which had preceded it, and might have been expected to have had a much more lasting effect. The Deluge itself, terrible as it was, spoke to only a few—eight persons only lived to tell the tale and to mourn over a desolated earth—but here some millions of people saw the mighty deed, and passed under the waters, and came up on the other side to rejoice that their wanderings were over and the land was their own at last. And yet even Israel soon forgot the lesson which this mighty deed had given them.

Yet much remains to be done. The land is to be possessed and enjoyed, and to this end the nations must be driven out and difficulties lie in the way; the very difficulties, too, which

the spies had seen (Num. xiii. 28)—strong walled cities, peoples great and strong, indeed, everything to discourage them; and one of these cities lay in their very path guarding the road to Jerusalem. Full in their sight at the other side of the Plain of Jordan, a very few miles away, lay Jericho, walled and fortified, guarding and commanding the only available way into the goodly land, and this first difficulty must be encountered.

But first, and in order *to strengthen and still further teach* Israel, God sent the Captain of His host to meet Joshua (Joshua v. 13, 14). Joshua was captain of that host, was he not? Yes, but only a subordinate captain. There was Another Whose presence might be forgotten, and Joshua and the hosts of Israel might after their victories have been tempted to say, "Mine own hand hath gotten me this victory," and they might, too, have been tempted during the conflict to think that their wisdom, and skill, and prowess, were the sufficient cause of their success; but God in His abundant grace, knowing what effect such thoughts would have upon His people, sent one to correct them; and Joshua saw a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand, and from this man he got the intimation that although he himself was captain of the host of the Lord, there was yet Another before Whose Face he must bow and worship, Who held that position over him, and in Whom he must fight, and in Whose might he should prevail over his enemies. What a blessing it would be if many christians would learn this lesson to-day. Instead of hearing, as we so often do, men of God making and perfecting their own plans, and then asking the Lord to bless and further them, we would see and hear them waiting till God should show what He desires to have done, and then we should see His servants gladly and obediently *doing just what the Captain of the Lord's host* had commanded. The Lord would have us wait for our orders from Him, and then, having got them and knowing we have got them, go forward, obediently to His word, expecting Him to make the work a success. Our method generally is to think out our own schemes, and as we press them forward, we ask God to come second and bless what we have thought it best to do. What

we are doing may not be at all what He has desired us to do, and although no one can say He will not bless such work (for such is His grace that He often blesses His servants even when they are engaged in work which He has not ordered) still there cannot be so much, nor such good, success as if He were the Initiator of our enterprises. Joshua did not find it difficult to take his lesson. "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" was his response to his Captain's introduction of Himself in that capacity, ready to take second place as ready as to take first place, and ready to obey as gladly as to command.

Here is the true spirit of service for God, and here is the spirit which the Lord can use for mighty deeds; and the Lord is now about to put it to the test. Jericho must be taken, but how? Shall He bring to bear upon its fortified walls all the latest modern improvements in warfare? Shall He scale the heights of the surrounding mountains, and bring wood and burn Jericho with fire? Shall He prepare battering rams and other machines to beat down the walls, or shall He invest the city and, preventing the entrance of supplies, starve the garrison into surrender? These are some of the schemes human skill would have suggested, but none of them was any part of God's plan for reducing Jericho. His plan is nearly always *very different* from man's best, even though wise men may be inclined to laugh God's plan to scorn; and so it was here.

With what fear and trembling, we may judge, did the people of Jericho see the first advance of Israel's host upon their city. They had heard of and seen God's mighty works, and now they were about to feel His Hand. The only question with them was, "How long will it be before they take the city?" But when they saw the men of war walk round the city to the accompaniment of the music of rams' horns, and retire without having struck a blow, or made one single preparation for the attack, we may be pardoned if we think that their fear rapidly changed to contempt and mockery. Especially might this be so if they saw, and doubtless they did, that in the body of the attacking host the sacred emblem, the Ark of the Lord, was being carried, and yet no

attack was made. The second day and the third, pass in the same manner, and the fourth, fifth, and sixth, and each time the parade seems more ridiculous than before—nothing attempted, nothing done *for a whole week*, and the host has returned to camp, and the city is as far from being taken as ever. So say the wiseacres. Does God say so? No, He says, "You have obeyed Me although men think you mad. My judgment will soon be manifest, and it will be in your favour." And so the procession takes its way again on the seventh day, and as it winds round and round the city, the men on the walls laugh to scorn the apparently empty show; and the rude music makes the whole thing seem to them absurd, but they were not in the counsels of the Lord, or they would not have laughed. They would have seen in this quiet, steady march of an obedient people, the surest sign of the speedy intervention of the mighty Captain of the host of the Lord, on behalf of that host, and of the certain and speedy destruction of the city. Six times the city is encompassed, and the seventh time is all but finished, when the word is passed along, "Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city," and the people shouted, and the priests blew with the trumpets of rams' horns, and the walls fell down flat (Joshua vi. 16-20). God and His people had obtained the victory. Whose Hand had done it? Whose Hand had caused those walls to burst asunder and fall? No man's skill could be seen in all this. No man's power had reduced Jericho. To God alone must be given the glory,* and the very absence of

* Not even this wonderful interposition of the Lord's Hand has escaped the ravages of those whose delight seems to be in robbing God of His part in His mighty deeds. The fear of "the supernatural" seems to overwhelm them. We have been gravely told that the fall of Jericho's walls was, after all, a natural result of a natural law. There is a law in nature which makes it possible to overturn the mightiest structure without the touch of a hand or a weapon, and it reads thus: In connection with every building there is a key-note, and if one can find that key-note and sound it loudly enough, the building will fall to the ground. Joshua found this key-note, and the shout and the blast of the rams' horns were pitched in this note, and the fall of Jericho was the necessary and natural result!!! The attempt to eliminate the supernatural fails here miserably, however, for the discovery of the key-note, and the pitching of those thousands of voices and those rams' horns in perfect tune with it, demand an almost greater exercise of supernatural power than the destruction of the walls themselves.

everything which human wisdom would suggest for Joshua's plan of attack, makes it impossible to say that any other hand but God's had to do with this mighty act.

Defeat.

Israel has now entered upon his promised career of victory. The Lord had said that every place whereon the *sole of his foot should tread* had been given him, and that there should not any man be able to stand before Joshua all the days of his life (Joshua i. 3, 5), and these were only repetitions of the promises previously given (Deut. xi. 24, 25). The way is now open, the land is before him, and there is now nothing for him but a series of victories. Behind him lie the proofs of the faithfulness of that God Who has called him out of Egypt and given him the land, and promised him the possession of it; and immediately we see him set out upon that career as full of hope as we should have expected to see him. Ai is now to be taken, and he chooses the army by whom it is to be taken. He does not need many men for the task. Three thousand men he thinks are enough out of the victorious host of Israel to take and destroy that little town; seeing that the God of Israel, the Lord of Hosts, is with them. This will be nothing but a triumphal march, enlivened and cheered by the music of the promises which the Lord had given them. But hark! what sound do we hear? See! what sight is that? Can it be that Israel has turned his back to his enemies? Can it be that God's promise has failed? Did He not say that there should not be a man who should stand before him? Has His word failed? No, surely it cannot be. Israel cannot be beaten. Alas! yes, it is too true. Chased by their enemies whom they had almost despised!

What shall Israel say to this? There stand the promises. There, too, well within his sight and memory, are the proofs and monuments of God's power and faithfulness, and now he has before his eyes this failure. How shall he reconcile these things? *And what shall we say*, we who live at the end of the ages, and have seen the proofs of God's faithfulness all down those ages? For upon the answer we are able to give to the difficulties here presented may depend our ability to

comprehend some—many—of the experiences of God's people of to-day. Shall we test the position then? God had said, "There shall no man be able to stand before you," yet here the case is reversed. Israel is not able to stand before the little town of Ai. Shall we say, then, that the word of God is to be limited? If so, how shall we limit it? Did God not mean what He said? Do not our eyes tell us that He did not mean it as we think He did? Of course they do. Shall we, then, believe them and discredit God's word? For if we think that He did not mean what He said, in the sense which His words convey, we discredit His word, His statement, and His promise, and lend our ear to the one who whispered to Eve, "Yea, hath God said" (*vide* p. 21).

Then, if God meant what He said, has He failed? Has He proved Himself unable to do as He had said? No, we cannot say that He has proved Himself unable to do it, but is it not clear that He has failed to do it? In other words—"We dare not say He cannot, but it is clear He will not." Is this true? It seems so, but *is* it so? We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. v. 7). Alas! too often the reverse of this is true, and christians walk by sight, not by faith, and they judge the Lord by a sight that is not clear, instead of by a faith that will not doubt His word.

What then? Shall we discredit our own eyes and say that Israel is not beaten? Shall we call that a victory which our eyes tell us is a defeat, a disgraceful flight? This would be as unwise as the other course is wrong. The defeat is a startling fact, but still a fact, and no disbelieving it would change it or make it less than a fact. Ay, and no disbelieving of *christians' failures* to-day, or even what seem to us to be facts disproving or discrediting God's promises, or causing us to suppose that God does not, or did not, mean just what He says in His precious Word, will alter those facts or remove them.

What then? Let us seek the reason for the failure. In Deuteronomy the promises just cited are prefaced with one little word, a very little word, but a word of great power. There are few thinking men who do not know the power of a condition attached to a covenant.

In the course of the author's career at the bar, he was once called upon to defend an action brought by a lessee against his lessor upon a covenant in a lease, which ran thus:—"If the lessee shall, during the said term, erect on the land a house of . . ." (certain materials, size, etc.) . . . then the lessor would, at the end of the term, pay to the lessee a sum of money. In the course of the trial, it transpired that the lessee had not erected a house of any materials, or of any size whatever on the land, and it need hardly be said that the lessor had an easy victory. That little word "if" controlled the whole covenant, and God's promises are nearly all prefaced or otherwise controlled by an "if." "If ye shall diligently keep all these commandments," etc. (Deut. xi. 22). See also the promises as made to Joshua (Joshua i. 7-8). "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses, My servant, commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper . . ." "This Book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." These promises were conditional, then, and nearly every one of the Lord's promises *is conditional.* If, then, His promises to His Church are conditional, the breach of the condition, or the failure to keep the terms, will cause forfeiture of the blessing promised. This lesson is taught us in unmistakable terms by the defeat at Ai; Israel had sinned. The command had been disobeyed, and for the time, the blessing was lost. Ay, and more than for a time, for a failure like this leaves its mark upon both sides. The enemy wins and laughs, and God's people lose and are disheartened. Ay, and God's Name suffers.

We can almost fancy we hear Joshua, when he cried out in his agony of grief and disappointment, "What wilt thou do unto Thy great Name?" (Joshua vii. 9). It is well when God's people see that His honour is involved in His people's failure. We think too little of the effect of our failure upon His Name. We become so self-centred that we

forget God's part in our lives, and the result often is the repetition of our failure. Yes, Israel has sinned, but one might say, surely this was no great matter. One only of all the host of Israel had committed the act, and all he had done was to take a Babylonish garment and a little gold and silver, not much. Surely this was not enough to justify the permitting of such a calamity to befall the people. But who shall judge God? Who is able to judge Him? Ay, and who shall say what sin is little and what sin is great? It is the spirit of disobedience which creates the mischief, and that spirit of disobedience, if unchecked, will do great wickedness as readily as it will commit small sins. It is not the result, but *the source of the evil* which is important; and this spirit of disobedience again springs from the same old spirit of disbelief, and it would appear that the Lord would teach us that this spirit of disobedience, which is the child of disbelief, breaks the fellowship between God and us, and thus brings about disaster. May the God of all condescension teach us this lesson fully.

And Achan must die. Sin must be put away, not only judged, but *put away.*

Since Israel has crossed the Jordan, God has spoken twice —once in power, when, by bringing down Jericho's walls, He proved His power to overturn the walled cities, which they feared, and lay them in ruins at their feet, without their help, and by means which human wisdom would despise—and once in judgment, when He showed that sin would prevent His working for them, and must be avenged. After this, He may well expect that His power and His holiness will be remembered, and that the lessons He has given of His faithfulness to His word will not be forgotten. Yes, and one might reasonably expect, too, that the surrounding nations would have discovered that it was futile to fight against God, for surely here were public events sufficient to compel belief, if ever there could be such events sufficient for such a purpose. But was it so? The nations round about "gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord" (Joshua ix. 2), and they even went as far as to war against Gibeon, because it had made peace with Israel (Joshua x. 4).

And once again the Lord interposed on Israel's behalf in such a manner as to show clearly that their victory was not of man's winning (Joshua x. 11); and yet again did He show Himself mighty, by stopping the sun and the moon in their courses till Israel had completed the victory.*

The Lord had stopped the Jordan without man's assistance. He had brought down Jericho's walls without man's aid, and now He permits man to join in the work, but still shows him that the Captain of the host of the Lord is the mighty Man of valour by Whom, and by Whom alone, that host is led to triumph.

Is there any doubt that He has spoken? Need He repeat? If He does not repeat His words, shall Israel be justified at any time afterwards in saying that He has become silent? Surely not! These public events will ever remain indelibly imprinted on men's memories as proof, irrefragable proof, that "God has spoken," and as He spoke He had shown Israel (1) How their difficulties and their enemies were to be removed out of their way—not by armies, nor by human strength, nor by human skill, but by the manifested power of a living God (Joshua iii. 10); and (2) How they were to be led and governed by the Voice of the Lord Himself, listened to, heard, and obeyed.

The Book of Judges presents us with the mournful sequel to all this. Failure after failure to obey the command of the Lord marks the history of His people in the land. The

* I am quite aware that I incur the risk of being classed among the unlearned when I venture to treat this incident as anything more than a poem, a myth. I know all the learned arguments which have been employed to prove that God could not do what He is said to have done, and also that the words of the history do not necessarily mean that the sun and the moon stood still. I am still convinced, however, that the Hand which could stop Jordan's rushing waters, and could cause Jericho's walls to crumble, could do what the Book says it did, and I am sure that the words mean what they say; and if they do not mean just what they say, we have an element of uncertainty about the whole of Scripture, which robs not this part alone, but other parts of, perhaps, more vital importance, of any real value to men. If God's Book does not mean what it says, we are at sea without a chart, or with a chart which misleads, and without a pilot to guide us; unless, indeed, we accept the position which Rome takes and believes, that what the Church says is our infallible guide. And where will this position lead us? To this question history gives a very definite answer.

children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites. Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean. Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer (Judges, i. 21, 27, 29), and so on with heart-saddening consistency. Again and again they had been warned that if they did not drive out the old inhabitants of the land, those old inhabitants should ensnare and injure them. Moses had told them that they would be pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides (Num. xxxiii. 55). Joshua had told them that the inhabitants of the land would be snares and traps to them, scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes (Joshua xxiii. 13). Yet in spite of all commands and all warnings, they disobeyed. They made their enemies tributaries, thinking, no doubt, that it was better to make profit out of them than to do as God had commanded, and that there was not the danger which God had said there was, in allowing the idolators to remain among them. Again thinking that *they were wiser than God!* Again man, God's chosen people, makes choice, and again he chooses against God, and God lets him choose. He will not coerce man's will. He commands, as He has a right to do, and He warns of the effect of disobedience; and if man will disobey in spite of warning, He lets him go.

The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served Baalim. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth (Judges ii. 12, 13). Here, for the first time in the sacred narrative, we find indications of the extent to which men had wandered away from God. By this time, the worship of idols was almost universal, and the true God, the living God, was unknown, and the natural and necessary result had followed. Idolatry, wickedness, and vice overspread the world, and some of the vices which were practised were of the most degrading kind, and the Lord, wishing to save His people from these vices, warned them against that which had universally produced them, and commanded them to avoid it, and by the exercise of His power on their behalf He wooed them to a perfect allegiance to Himself. But they thought themselves wiser than He; they were sure there was *no danger of their falling away*, and so they, disbelieving God

again, disobeyed Him; and then followed exactly what the Lord had said. They could not stand before their enemies (Judges ii. 14), and they were greatly distressed (Judges ii. 15).

A dark day had now dawned upon Israel, and each successive hour of that day seemed darker than its predecessor. They served Cushan-rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia, Eglon, King of Moab, Jabin, King of Canaan, the Midianites, and the Amalekites, who reduced them so far that no sustenance was left for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass (Judges vi. 4), and then the Philistines oppressed them so that Israel was sore distressed (Judges x. 8, 9). Still, whenever Israel cried to the Lord, He raised up deliverers; and while the deliverer lived, Israel followed the Lord, and enjoyed blessing; but no sooner was the deliverer dead than Israel fell off again into idolatry. Yet God heard them time and again, until, as if wearied out with their continual backsliding, the Lord says to them in answer to their prayer, "Ye have forsaken Me, and served other gods . . . go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation" (Judges x. 13, 14). But even after this the Soul of the Lord, the God of all grace, was grieved for the misery of Israel, and again He delivered them, and yet again. Every time that Israel turned to the Lord He delivered them, and every time that Israel forsook Him, Israel suffered, but "God let them go." Would Israel have been justified in saying that God had become silent? No, clearly not. Even in permitting these calamities to overtake them, He was showing *His tender compassion* and His faithfulness. He desired that they should return to Him, and His very letting them go was a message to them of His faithfulness. But it was He Who raised up the deliverer from time to time, and many of these deliverers came with a message from Him, calling them to return to the God Who had brought them up out of Egypt.

No, the Lord was not silent. Although the great multitude of the people may not have been—actually were not—aware that He had spoken or was speaking—He spoke to Gideon, and none but Gideon knew of it. He spoke to Eli and to Samuel, but to the rest it seemed as if He were silent. Many in Israel may

have been asking why God had forsaken Israel, why He had permitted all these evils to come upon them ; and remembering the spiritual darkness which then overspread the land, we in this day of light may perhaps think they were not to blame for the ignorance which prompted the inquiry. But while it may be well for us to judge gently if we judge at all, we must not forget that their blindness, their ignorance, was their fault, for Israel might have known—should have known—and we must remember, too, that there is *another side to the inquiry*, God's side, and in asking these questions, men were hinting, if not broadly stating, that God was in some sense, in some way, to blame, and it behoves us to see to it that in our judgment God does not suffer injustice.

Yet one other matter in Israel's history requires consideration. Israel was, even in their backsliding, intensely religious. When Jephthah went out to fight the Ammonites, who were then opposing Israel, he vowed a vow to the Lord (Judges xi. 30, 31). When Israel was being beaten by the Philistines, they called for the Ark of the Lord to be brought into the camp, that it might save them out of the hands of their enemies (1 Sam. iv. 3). Like many in the present day, many of the Israelites thought that the assistance of the Lord could be bought by sacrifice ; and also, like many in this day of light and spiritual knowledge, they thought that the presence of some physical, tangible thing, which had its proper place in the service of God where He chose to use it, could be substituted for the Presence of God Himself, and would bring them deliverance, even though they were not in a state of obedience to Him. In all ages, the enemy of God and man has endeavoured to persuade men that *formal religiosity* may take the place of worship ; and that God's deliverance may be expected by some means which man himself can discover, by the use of things which God Himself has ordained to have a place in His service, but which man can use without Him, without His command, and in consequence without His blessing. The Ark of the Covenant had gone before them around Jericho's walls, and they had fallen ; and the men of Israel remembered these facts, but forgot that in this case the Ark was taken at the command of the

Lord, and that it was He, and not the Ark, Who had given them the victory. They had *forgotten Him*, and their conceptions of the Ark and their thoughts about it had become mere formalism, religiosity, superstition, and they had become unable to hear God's Voice. And this was the state of Israel at the time of the last of the Judges.

CHAPTER X.

THE KINGDOM.

THE most serious act of distrust and disloyalty to God of which Israel was guilty was, perhaps, the act which, for human prudence and wisdom, would have won them the greatest credit; and this was the demand for a king to judge them like all the nations. They may have been, they doubtless had been, guilty of more openly immoral acts, acts of heathenish cruelty and of idolatry, but even these things were consistent with a certain amount of recognition of God, as the Ruler of the nation. But now the Captain of the host of the Lord is put aside, and Israel *must have a man* to rule, and judge, and lead them, like the other nations. God had chosen them out from among the nations to be a peculiar people, to be a special people to Himself, above all the people that were on the face of the earth (Deut. vii. 6), "above all the nations that were upon the earth (Deut. xiv. 2), to make them "high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour" (Deut. xxvi. 19). He had promised them that so long as they obeyed Him, and so long as every male went up to Jerusalem three times in the year to worship, no man should desire their land (Exod. xxxiv. 24). He would enlarge their borders. In short, He would be the Leader of their host, their King (Exod. xxxiv. 24); but they said, "Nay, but we will have a king over us" (1 Sam. viii. 19). They had descended from the place where God had put them, to the level of other nations, and now the other nations were their examples, and their conduct and their desires were framed, not upon God's promise and commands, but upon the model of the other nations.

It was not now God Who should fight their battles, but a man, and the thing displeased Samuel, and it displeased the

Lord; and the Lord accepted their decision as *a rejection of Himself* that He should not reign over them (1 Sam. viii. 7). He was not trusted to lead their host. He was not trusted to rule them, and He "let them go," and the path they took led downward. It might seem to them, and it may seem to carnal minds to-day, that the glory of the nation would be increased by the pomp, and splendour, and majesty, which surrounded the person and state of a king; that the army which he would gather around him would add to the glory and ensure the stability of the kingdom. But those who thought so then, like those who think so to-day, forgot the power, and the faithfulness, and the promises of Him Who was that day rejected from being King over Israel (1 Sam.viii. 7). All that lustre and splendour were of the earth, earthy; but the people over whom God rules have a glory, a splendour, and a power, unseen it may be by carnal eyes, but real, and greater, and *more glorious than the earthy.*

Think of a nation whose borders are kept unbroken by a Power which human eyes cannot discern, but through or over which man cannot pass; which could even prevent the enemy from desiring to invade the land; which could bring down the walls of Jericho with a mighty crash, but without the use of a single weapon of war; which could, when He chose to permit His people to participate in the work of taking possession, cause the sun and the moon to stand still till the work was done; and could by His hailstones and His thunders perfect the defeat of the enemies of His people. This was a glory so different from that of the surrounding nations that they would have been compelled to stand in awe of that nation, and admit that it was high above them in "praise, and in name, and in honour" (Deut. xxvi. 19). But Israel left the *protection of that power*, and rebelled against that God, and went down to the level of earthly plans, and earthly protection, and earthly methods. Their path led downwards. They thought, no doubt, that they were taking a step upward and onward, that their place among the nations would be recognised and assured, if they had a king to lead their host to battle, but this thought was caused by their forgetting God.

Why did they forget Him? Was it because He had become silent, because He had ceased to speak to men, or to work miracles, or cause public events to occur? By no means. He spoke to Samuel, and He spoke by Samuel, and men were accustomed to go to him for a message from the Lord, and Samuel was accustomed to tell out to the people what the Lord had said to him (1 Sam. ix. 6, 15-20). And in their own time the Lord had, by a mighty public event, thundered on the Philistines and vanquished them (1 Sam. vii. 10), and yet the great majority of the people, and the leaders of thought among them, must have thought and said that God had become silent. "Are not our enemies our masters?" they would say. "Do we not fail every time we try to drive them out? Did not God promise that every place where the soles of our feet should tread should be ours? And is it not true that we are often compelled even to hide our grain, and ourselves, when we thresh and winnow it? (Judges vi. 11). God has become silent. We must adopt some means of our own devising, for the protection of our homes, our fields, and our flocks. See how the other nations succeed under their kings. We shall do as they do. It is wise." Alas, not only had they forgotten God, but they had forgotten His command to go up thrice a year to worship at Jerusalem, and His promise to protect their land while they did so. The Arm of God was something they could not see, while the arm of flesh was present with them, and their thoughts were carnal. Had they *believed God and obeyed Him*, He would have kept His word. They chose to disbelieve, and disobey, and His word was fulfilled, for He had told them what would happen if they forsook Him. Once again they chose, and once again they chose *against* God.

How eloquent and plaintive are the words of the prophet Hosea on just this very act of Israel. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help. I will be thy King: Where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities—and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath" (Hosea xiii. 9-11). Or,

more clearly, as it is translated in Segond's French translation, "That which has caused thy ruin, O Israel, is that thou wert against Me, against Him Who could help thee. Where now is thy king? Let him deliver thee in all thy cities. Where are thy judges about whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in My anger. I will take him from thee in My wrath." Yes, the ruin of Israel was that they were against the Lord. It would be gladness of heart to many if the same thing were not true of the Church to-day.

So Israel then entered upon a stage in his career which was based upon disbelief, distrust, and disobedience, and thenceforth they had *no right to call upon God* for deliverance. But some will say, "Have any men or peoples a right to call upon God for deliverance, and expect Him to grant it?" Most undoubtedly, yes! When He has promised, He holds Himself bound, but when His promises are conditional, the conditions must be fulfilled.

Man has no rights contrary to God's Will, nor can it be said that he has any rights against God. A dutiful son of a loving father may have no rights which he can enforce against his father, but he certainly has rights as a son, which his father will recognise without any enforcing. And if a man of honour makes a promise, although there may be no consideration to make his promise a binding contract, yet that promise *will bind* the man of honour, not because it can be enforced, but because he would never even think of disregarding it. And such a promise, made by such a man, would confer a right upon the one to whom the promise was made —a right to expect, though not to enforce, the fulfilment of the promise; and if this is so with regard to man, how much more so *with God*, Who changes not.

On the other hand, if a promise is conditional, that is, if one promises that if certain things are done or happen, the promiser will do something—then if the things to be done or to happen are not done, or do not happen, the promise gives rise to no rights, whether it be made by man or by the Lord. And Israel had broken and disregarded every condition which the Lord had imposed, and thus had forfeited every right which otherwise they might have possessed; and in place of

those rights they now had a king, a man to judge them, to fight their battles, to go before them and reign over them. In other words, they had reduced themselves from the position of the chosen, protected, and led people of the Lord, to the same level as the other nations around them. Their protection, their weapons of war, their methods of warfare, must now be like those of their neighbours who knew not God. Saul, their first king, was a choice young man and a goodly (1 Sam. ix. 2), towering in stature above the rest of the people, just the kind of man they wanted, yet his reign was not marked with the success anticipated, for about two years after he began to reign, the people were in a strait, hiding themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits (1 Sam. xiii. 6), neither was there a smith in all the land (1 Sam. xiii. 19), for *the Philistines were ruling* over them, oppressing them, and preventing them from even arming themselves; and the first recorded victory of his reign was won, not by him, but by his son Jonathan, and that victory was attributed by the people to its proper source, not even to Jonathan, but to God, Jonathan working with Him (1 Sam. xiv. 45); and the people were right, for God had promised that He would not forsake His people for His great Name's sake (1 Sam. xii. 22). And so although out of touch, out of communion with God, suffering affliction, and in sore distress because they had forsaken the Lord, yet *the Lord had not forsaken them*, and while it must needs be that He permit them to go their own way, for He still respects the freedom of will and power of choice with which He endowed man at the beginning, yet He yearns over them, as if waiting and watching for an opportunity to interpose and deliver them for His own Name's sake.

Hear how Isaiah writes of just a similar state of matters long years afterwards: "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift . . . till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a

mountain, and as an ensign on an hill. And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you" (Isa. xxx. 15-18). Watching and waiting till Israel *should see the folly* of their own way, and turn back again to Him, that He might be gracious to them; and this was the attitude in which the Lord remained towards Israel all the time. But they would not return, and except during the reign of David and Solomon, and the few godly kings of Judah, after the separation into two kingdoms, Israel went on the way they had chosen; downward—away from God, drifting further and further. Saul inquired of the Witch of Endor, Jeroboam set up the golden calves in Bethel and in Dan, and taught Israel to worship them (1 Kings xii. 28), Ahab and Jezebel maintained the priests and prophets of Baal (1 Kings xvi. 29-33), and the people of Judah had burned incense, and poured out drink offerings to the queen of heaven, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem (Jer. xliv. 17). Indeed, the whole land was given over to idolatry. Israel and Judah had sunk to the level of their pagan neighbours. And during all this time was the Lord silent? Truly, to the great bulk of the people, it would have seemed so. We who have the inspired record of the times know that He was not, but to those who lived then *all the evidence pointed* to a silence of God or would have seemed to the majority so to point—but He was not silent. David inquired of the Lord, and He answered him; Solomon, too, heard God's Voice, and knew it; and all through the ages there were prophets of the Lord to whom and through whom He gave His word. Few they were, it is true, but there were few who would listen, and the messages He gave showed clearly and forcibly that, so far was He from maintaining an attitude of silence towards Israel or Judah, that He was waiting to know whether they would return to Him.

Jeremiah, in the chapter above quoted (xliv. 4, 5), has these words: "Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets rising up early and sending them, . . . but they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear . . ." Nor were there wanting public events which would have compelled belief, if such events were calculated to have that effect. Elijah's

doings on Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 30, 38), when the Lord sent down fire from heaven, to consume the burnt offering, were sufficiently public for any purpose, and the result was sufficiently startling in its expression of God's power, and sufficiently clear in its purpose, to have wrought a nation's conversion; but it did not, nor do we find that it wrought the conversion of a single person. Ahab and Jezebel went on their way as wickedly as ever, and Israel went on their downward path until God drove them out of the land, *as He had said He would.* The incident mentioned in 2 Kings vii. should have compelled belief if this were possible, but it did not. God had promised that there would be food sufficient in Samaria by next day—this was disbelieved, but the Lord of Hosts drove away the host of the Syrians, who left behind them food enough for the famished people of Samaria.

And when the Syrian king said that Jehovah was the God of the hills and not of the valleys, and sent up an army which filled the country, in the face of which army the children of Israel pitched like two little flocks of kids, God gave Israel the victory (1 Kings xx. 27-30). Instances might be multiplied wherein the Lord caused public events to occur which might have compelled belief, but which failed to do so. And then there were many events of a semi-public nature, and many of a private kind mentioned in the sacred narrative, which proved that although God seemed, to the multitude, and to the wise and learned, to have withdrawn Himself, *He was still present with His trusting ones.*

Naaman, the Syrian general, was healed of his leprosy by the direct power of God; true, he "used the means"; yes, but what means? The means which man despised, and which he himself was with difficulty induced to use (2 Kings v.).

Elisha cured the brackish spring with a cruse of salt (2 Kings ii. 20). What a piece of folly, the wise would say. Salt? Yes, salt! What folly. But it was the Lord Who said, "I have healed the waters."

Space would fail to tell of all the mighty things which were done by His Hand, even in backsliding Israel and

Judah. Yet notwithstanding this, how few there were even in those lands who knew that the Lord was among them of a truth. This truth was hidden from them by their own *disbelief and disobedience.*

And if there were few of Israel and Judah who knew this, what shall be said of the vast multitudes of the other nations around them? Many of the learned and the wise—the scientists of that day—were found in those nations. They would have scouted the idea of a living God, a silent God! Why, their thoughts could not rise even so high as a silent God. Gods many and lords many they followed, but there was no wholehearted belief in any one of them. And as to a living God, Who could make known His Will to man, the very mention of the idea would have caused the lip to curl with scorn.

What shall we, then, say to these things? That the tendency of man in spiritual things has been, at least up to the time to which our review has brought us, *to drift and drift* away from God, and, in his drift, to become more and more unfit and unable to hear and know the Voice of God; and less and less willing to listen to, believe, and obey Him; until at last the Voice became known only to the few, the very few. And this even in the nation which He had chosen for Himself, to be His own peculiar people, a people for His own possession.

As we follow the history of this people through their vicissitudes, we read a story full of interest and full of sadness, but a story full of the same truth—drifting until at last their drift away from God culminated in *their rejection and murder* of THE WORD OF GOD Himself when He came down to earth, and dwelt among them; their bitterness becoming the greater, the more He showed His Divine Character. Hark to their cry: "Away with Him, crucify Him." Do not release to us "this Man, but Barabbas." Well might Pilate ask, "Why, what evil hath He done?" He had revealed God to them, and they had drifted so far away from God that they did not now even wish to know Him. Yet, even then, there were the Simeons and the Annas, there were the Zachariahs and the Marys, and God spoke to them even then, but the

wise and learned Rabbis, and the Pharisees, and the scribes, and the lawyers, knew nothing of this, and joined in the cry, "We have no king but Cæsar." No, Israel once demanded a king, thus rejecting God from being King over them. Now they have no king but their oppressor. Yet God was in the midst of them, though they knew it not.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ERA OF THE CHURCH.

"*Last of all He sent unto them His Son, saying, They will reverence My Son*" (Matt. xxi. 37).

Of all the momentous occurrences which this earth has ever witnessed, that which culminated on Calvary was the most momentous. God's chosen people had, time and again, rejected His message sent by His servants the prophets, they had rejected Himself from being King over them, and they had turned every one to his own way; but an opportunity was again given them to stop and listen to His Voice, and this time by a Messenger Who brought with Him credentials which should have sufficed, and would in any ordinary case have sufficed, to prove His Divine mission and His own divinity. True, the evidential value of miracles has been very much overestimated and overstated; and far too much has been made to rest upon them; yet, nevertheless, miracles formed part of God's plan in *proving the divinity* of the Lord Jesus, and the fact of His Messiahship, and the Jews had before them both the miracles, and the Word which should have led them to expect them, and to identify by means of them, the Messenger of the Covenant Whom they were expecting; but in spite of all this, they not only refused to receive Him, but they insisted that He should be put to death. They did not know that they were putting to death the Son of God (Heb. vi. 6), the Prince of Life (Acts iii. 15), the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. ii. 8), but their ignorance was their fault. They might have known, they could have known, and they should have known, and their guilt was not lessened by their ignorance. Still, by this very crime of theirs, God was ready to open up a way, by which this nation, whose hands

were reddened with the Blood of His Son, might come back into the fellowship which they had lost, and yet nearer.

They rejected God's Messenger, yet God offered them, through His Blood, reconciliation, pardon, and *a restored nationality*, under the government of His Son, which, according to the prophets, is yet in store for them, in conjunction with the sister kingdom of Israel (Jer. iii. 18). What wonderful grace the Lord showed to His ancient, chosen people when, after all their rebellion and refusal to obey Him, culminating in such an act of hatred, He should send the messengers of His Gospel first to Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47), and then through Judea and Samaria, and then, not till then, to the uttermost parts of the world (Acts i. 8). But Judah rejected all this, and with the cry, "His Blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25), *turned their back finally* on God's Messenger and God's message.

Afterwards, scattered portions of the Jewish nation accepted the Gospel, and other portions rejected it; but the nation's answer was given to Pilate, and it was then that the children of Israel, at that time represented by Judah, nationally refused God's offers. The rejection of the Gospel, mentioned in Acts xiii. 45, 46, where the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia contradicted Paul, and blasphemed, was not in any sense a *national act;* nor is it right to say that the action of the Jews in Corinth, when Paul said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; . . . from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts xviii. 6); or of them in Rome, when he said, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it" (Acts xxviii. 28), was in any sense national conduct, nor was Paul's word to them a *judgment on the nation.* The nation was bound by its own act, and that act was the *rejecting*, and delivering to death, the Son of God. The gracious and merciful Lord was still willing to call out individuals from that nation, and the Gospel was first preached to them by the Master's own direction, and many, very many came out, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, but the *nation's rejection remained uncancelled and unwithdrawn.*

What then? Why! then the Gospel must be preached to

all the world (Matt. xiv. 14); and what was that Gospel? It was the glad news of repentance and remission of sins in the Name of Jesus (Luke xxiv. 47). The same Gospel was to be preached to those at Jerusalem as was to be preached among all nations. More than once we are told that there is no difference between *Jew and Gentile;* they were all under sin, all had sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Rom. iii. 9-23; Gal. iii. 28, 29; iv. 28).

It may be answered that the national rejection of the Gospel was not complete till after the occurrence of the incidents mentioned above, and that there was an institution, which was exclusively Jewish, existing between Pentecost and the last act of rejection; that mentioned in the twenty-eighth chapter of the Acts (this is, perhaps, what Sir Robert Anderson means when he speaks in one place of the "Pentecostal Church,"* and in another of the "Pentecostal dispensation,"† which he contrasts with the "Christian Church") and that until that rejection was complete, there were characteristics of the Church and the Gospel which did not, and do not, belong to the Christian Church, which arose later.

To this view some serious difficulties present themselves. First, Jesus spoke of only one Church when He said, "Upon this rock I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18). Not two Churches, but one, *My Church.* Second, we never read in the Word of two Churches —one only Church. One fold, one Shepherd. Third, in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, that wonderful prayer of the Lord is recorded, wherein He prayed, not for these only, but for those who should believe on Him through their word, "That they all might be one." Fourth, the commission given to the apostles —as we find it in Matthew, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. xxviii. 19, R.V.), and in Mark, "Go ye into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature," *the* Gospel—the same Gospel for all—included the Gentiles as much as the Jews.

It is true that Paul had a special revelation, and a special

* Page 83. † Page 205.

feature of the Gospel given to him; but that was just an amplification of the same Gospel—a statement that the Gentiles, who had been without Christ, aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, now in Christ, were made nigh by the Blood of Christ; Christ, having broken down the middle wall of partition, had made of twain—Jew and Gentile—one new man, so that the Gentiles were no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Eph. ii. 11-19; iii. 6). The mystery which was entrusted to Paul was, he tells us, that the Gentiles *should be fellow-heirs*, and of the same body.

In connection with this, too, the words of the Lord Jesus Himself are significant, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My Voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd" (John x. 16). There was, then, but one Gospel, one flock, one Shepherd; not one Gospel to the Jews and another to the Gentiles, but one to both; not one flock of Jewish believers, with different rites, and methods, and different powers. But *one flock* containing sheep of many colours, nationalities, customs, and habits of thought, but one hope, and one characteristic in common, that of sinners redeemed by the Blood of the Crucified Son of God, and one Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, Who gave His Life for the sheep—one body with many members, but one Head (1 Cor. xii.). Jesus did not require His Jewish disciples to abandon their Jewish customs, nor did His disciples require the Gentile disciples to forsake their own customs, unless they savoured of idolatry. The glad story now proclaimed was that all, whether Jew or Gentile, who had sinned, might be justified (Rom. iii. 24), brought nigh (Eph. ii. 13), made sons of God. God's heirs, joint heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17). This, of course, does not affect the question of *Israel's nationality*, it only means that just now God is calling out from Israel and the Gentiles those who will come to Him by the Lord Jesus Christ, and among these there is, in His purposes concerning them, no difference.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given, but to the Jews only, and for a while the Gospel was preached to none but

the Jews (Acts x. 44); but a time came when the testimony must be carried further, and Peter was sent by the Lord to Cæsarea to preach to Cornelius, a Roman centurion, a Gentile; and as he preached, the *same Holy Spirit* fell on the Gentile centurion and his house, Who had fallen on the Jewish believers in the upper chamber at Pentecost (Acts xi. 1-18). And the Gentiles were now found to be indeed fellow partakers with the Jews of the Holy Spirit of God; and in Him fellow partakers with them of all the powers and other blessings of the Church of God.

But what means this falling upon them of the Holy Spirit, and the *filling with the Holy Spirit*, of which we read? It is a matter of deep regret that few christians even to-day know the meaning and the significance of this wonderful fact. Have we not often heard godly men in prayer asking God to send the influence of His Spirit from heaven? and have we not often heard the same Holy Spirit referred to as "*it*"? True, the Authorised Version of our Bible is to a certain extent responsible for this latter habit, but we ought to have clear knowledge on these matters, and that would save us from making such mistakes. Now the Holy Spirit is a Person, and He is the Spirit of God, and He is called the Spirit of Christ (Rom. viii. 9). He came down from heaven according to the promise of the Father and of Jesus (Luke xxiv. 49), and He filled the disciples with Himself (Acts ii. 4), and they all spake with tongues, as He gave utterance; and then was seen such a transformation as never was even heard of before. Peter, vacillating Peter, impulsive, rash, unstable Peter—how bold he is now, how mightily he speaks now. Others, too, speak out in tongues which *they did not know before*, and they spoke with such power that men wondered, and, of course, some mocked. The wise ones, those who were too wise to make such a sight of themselves, they mocked as usual, and said, "These men are full of new wine" (Acts ii. 13). Like many to-day, they were unable to perceive that what had been promised before by God had come, and the Holy Spirit of God had left heaven and come down *to dwell in men* (Rom. viii. 9), to teach them (John xiv. 26), to guide them into all truth (John xvi. 13), to strengthen them

(Eph. iii. 16), and to fill them (Eph. v. 18); and that He had really begun to make use of the disciples, and give power to their testimony.

It would be well if these truths were generally known by christians of the present time. But some may say, Does not this mean that God Himself is dwelling in man? —and if it means this, how can it be true? And in the present state of christian teaching, one may be saddened, *but can hardly be surprised*, by the questions. Hear the answer from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter (Greek, παρακλητος, *paracletos*, helper, advocate, one called to another to aid, advise, or otherwise assist), . . . even the Spirit of Truth; Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and SHALL BE IN YOU" (John xiv. 17). To this some will reply, "But these words were spoken to the disciples alone, or rather to the eleven, after the supper, and do not apply to others." But is this so? There were one hundred and twenty in the upper chamber, and they were *all* filled (Acts ii. 4). Cornelius received the gift of the Holy Spirit, as He was given to the apostles at the beginning (Acts xi. 17); and Cornelius was not only outside of the ranks of the apostles, but he was a Gentile. Paul, writing to the Romans, says: "Now if *any man* have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His, and if Christ be in you . . . But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead *dwell in* you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that *dwelleth in you*" (Rom. viii. 9-11).

Just here the questions are forced upon us: "Was there any difference in this respect between Jew and Gentile?" "Were the Jews who believed in Jesus, but retained their Jewish customs, worshipped in the synagogues, and kept the law—were they, in regard to the Holy Spirit, in any better position than, or in any different position from, the Gentiles who believed in Jesus, and who forsook their idols to serve the Lord?" Before we say they were, we should be sure from God's Word that we are right. We should

be able to show that at any rate some such difference was contemplated, but Scripture says nothing to favour the idea, and the whole trend of inspired teaching is opposed to it. No difference, no difference, seems to be the dominant thought through the whole Gospel story.

Let us now contemplate what has been unfolded. *A Church, the Church of God*, composed of men and women of many nationalities, Gentiles, as well as Jews, who have been sinners under condemnation, under wrath, and who now had passed out of death into life (1 John iii. 14), who have been called out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter ii. 9); children of God (John i. 12, 13; Rom. viii. 14-16; 1 John iii. 1, 2); filled, strengthened, taught, and led by the Holy Spirit of God; branches of the True Vine (John xv. 5); members of the Body of which Jesus is the Head (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13); complete in Christ, in Whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. ii. 9); who once were dead in sins, but are now quickened together with Christ; raised up *together*, made *to sit together* in the heavens in Christ (Eph. ii. 5, 6); once far off; now made nigh (Eph. ii. 13); no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Eph. ii. 19); born from above (John iii. 3; i. 13); heirs of God—that is, God's heirs—joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom. viii. 16, 17); one flock; one fold, with one Shepherd. There is no room, then, for the suggestion that one portion of this Church was possessed of powers, or privileges, which were not equally possessed by every other part, *e.g.*, that the Jewish portion had powers which the Gentile portion had not, that God spoke to the Jewish portion and was silent to the Gentile portion, or that the signs and wonders, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost spoken of in Hebrews (chap. ii. 4), and in Mark (chap. xvi. 20), were in evidence among the Jews only, and not among the Gentile christians*; nor is there room for the

* 1 Cor. i. 7. Of course, I am aware of the attack which has been made on the last eleven verses of Mark's Gospel, and have carefully followed all the learned efforts to get rid of it, and have discovered why so much has been said against its genuineness; and I will only say here that there is as much evidence in its favour as against it, and all the evidence against it is of the same quality as that of the higher critics so ably exposed by Sir Robert Anderson himself.

suggestion that up to a certain time the gifts, and powers, and signs were in exercise in the whole Church; and that after the death of Stephen, or after the time when the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, in Corinth, or in Rome, rejected the Gospel message, the exercise of these gifts ceased. We search the whole record in vain for any evidence to lead us to such a conclusion. On the contrary, we find Paul writing to the Corinthians who were Gentiles in these words, "*Ye come behind in no gift*" (1 Cor. i. 7). But it may be asked, "What gifts does the Apostle refer to?" We are left in no darkness as to this, for in the same Epistle he names them. He says, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" (chap. xii. 4); then he shows that these gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit as He will; and he calls them "the word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge," faith, gifts of healings, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues (Ibid. 8-11), and these are the gifts in no one of which the Corinthians came behind. These gifts are worked by the same Spirit; in other words, they are spiritual gifts (Ibid. 1).

Earlier in the same Epistle he has shown that spiritual things are not understood, except by spiritual men (chap. ii.). Further down the same twelfth chapter he says, God hath set in the Church — built in — apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, etc. (ver. 28). Writing to another Gentile Church, he says, "There is one Body, and one Spirit," and "unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ"; and then he mentions some of the gifts, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. iv. 4, 7, 11); so that these gifts of the Spirit were equally given to Jews and Gentiles. Again there was no difference.

And Paul tells us what was the mystery which was revealed to him, and with regard to which he may have found himself at issue with the older apostles, as Sir Robert Anderson says, and it was this, "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same Body" (Eph. iii. 6); and he goes on to pray for that Gentile Church, that God would grant them, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by the Spirit

in the inward man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; that they might know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that they might be *filled with all the fulness of God*; and he goes on to say, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto Him be glory" (Eph. iii. 20); and to yet another Gentile Church he writes, that in Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and that they are made full, complete, in Him (Col. ii. 9, 10).

One Body whose Head is Christ, Who makes them full in Himself; one fold with one Shepherd, whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. Nor is this all, and it is in letters *to Gentile Churches* that we find the most wonderful statements about the Church. "Know ye not," the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God *dwelleth* in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16). And again, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost Which is in you?" (1 Cor. vi. 19). And yet again, "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Cor. vi. 16). These latter words were originally addressed specially to Israel in many parts of the Old Testament, but here the Apostle, by inspiration of God, applies them to the Corinthians, a Gentile Church. To another Gentile Church he writes, ". . . through Him we both"—the Jew and the Gentile—"have *access by one spirit unto the Father*. Now therefore ye"—Gentiles—"are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, . . . builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 18, 19, 22); and again to the same Gentile Church he says that he prays for them, *inter alia*, that they "might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 19).

The Holy Spirit Who descended at Pentecost was not withdrawn when the apostles died, nor at the death of the disciples who were converted by the preaching of the apostles, and upon whom the apostles had laid hands, as is suggested by some writers. *He remained in the Church*; He it was by Whose power even the apostles worked miracles. The Name

of Jesus did not lose its power at the death of the apostles, nor at the death of their immediate successors, and Peter declared that it was by the power of that Name, and not by the apostle's power or holiness, that the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple was healed (Acts iii. 12-16).

The Church of the Living God—this is the character of the institution* we have been considering, this is its quality, this is its name. Fully equipped for the work given it. Endowed with wisdom, power, and teaching.

It has become necessary now to ask and answer the question, Was there a time in the history of this Church, this wonderful institution, when its powers ceased or changed; that is, when by the direction of God, and through alteration of His method of working, that which was normal and natural became obsolete or only occasional? Did the power to work miracles cease, or did God take away that power; or did He limit it, or cause its exercise to be partial or fitful; or did He prevent its exercise in any but unusual cases; "at times," as has been said? Sir Robert Anderson says, "The special testimony to the Jew having ceased, the purpose for which miracles were given was accomplished" (p. 58). We now ask him to state specifically when this testimony ceased. It did not cease on the death of Stephen. On three several occasions, and at three several places, Paul preached to the Jews, and on each of these occasions some Jews rejected the message, and thereupon Paul turned to the Gentiles. There may have been other occasions, but these will suffice. These occasions were the rejection of the Gospel message by the Jews at Antioch, Pisidia, Corinth, and Rome. It would seem that, at any rate, it was not till the occasion of the last rejection that the testimony ceased or was withdrawn.

But we are entitled to a clear statement and proof of the date

* I use this word for want of a better. The Church of God is more than an institution. It is a living entity, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, and when in sound spiritual health it is led, guided, directed, controlled by the same Holy Spirit. It is the Body of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head, and as when the physical part of our nature is in health, the head controls all the members, so when the Church is in sound spiritual health, the Lord controls its members, and each of these members is in like manner indwelt by the same Spirit, and when in spiritual health is controlled by Him (1 Cor. xii.).

and occasion when that testimony ceased. It is worthy of note that it was immediately after the word of Paul to the Jews of Antioch, after he had said, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts xiii. 46), that it is said the Lord gave testimony to the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done (Acts xiv. 3); and shortly after, we have specific mention of the miracle of healing the impotent man (Acts xiv. 8-10); and quite ten years after this, and after he had said to the Jews at Corinth, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts xviii. 6), "God wrought *special miracles* by the hands of Paul" (Acts xix. 11-12); and about five years later we are told of the raising from the dead of the young man Eutychus, who had fallen down from the third loft of the building in which Paul was preaching (Acts xx. 9-12). And again, still later, the incidents are recorded of Paul shaking off the viper which had fastened on his hand, and healing the father of Publius and others in the Island of Melita (Acts xxviii. 4-9); so that we have proof of the continuance of miracles, particularly miracles of healing, in the Church up to a short time before the close of the narrative which preceded the Epistles.

Are we to believe, then, that the special testimony to the Jew continued all this time, and only ceased when, at Rome, Paul said to the Jews there, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it?" (Acts xxviii. 28). Is not this an insecure foundation on which to build such a superstructure? These words are not so strong as those used on the two previous occasions, nor is there anything in the context to show that a word like this, spoken to some Jews at Rome, was the closing up of the Gospel message to the nation. There was nothing of a national character about either Paul's preaching to them or their rejection of his message.

Again, we do not know that Peter, the one of whom it was said that the Gospel of the circumcision was committed to him (Gal. ii. 7), or James, or the other apostles, had ceased to deliver their message to the Jews. We have no information, and can form no sound conclusion.

In the Epistles, too, we are not disappointed in our search

for evidence of the *continuance of miracles*. To the Galatians, Paul writes as if the working of miracles was an ordinary occurrence (Gal. iii. 5), and this was thirteen years after turning to the Gentiles; and later still than this was the word written to the Corinthians, "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom," etc. . . . "to another the working of miracles" (1 Cor. xii. 3-10), so that, so far as Scripture is concerned, and so far as the Church's history is contained therein, we have solid ground for the statement that *God had not altered* His method or withdrawn from His Church any power; but rather are we forced to the conclusion that during all the time covered by the inspired record, the Church remained *as fully equipped* as she was on the day on which the marvellous event occurred when the Spirit shook the place where the disciples were gathered together, and took possession of the faithful ones so gathered.

Shall we now ask, Is there a counterpart of this glorious Church on earth to-day? Where shall we look for it? In the boastful Church of Rome, with her Pope, whose proudest boast is, not that he is a spiritual head of the Church of the living God, but rather that he is *Pontifex Maximus*, that is, the chief successor of the pagan high priest of Baal?* With her proud hierarchy of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, etc., who claim for themselves exclusively the word Church, as if they, and they alone, were included therein—the laity, so-called, being only—well, the laity—the common people? With her sacraments, confessional, penances, indulgences, holy water, and other heathen practices, but confessedly *without the Presence* and power of a living God, Who now can only appear or be heard by His so-called Vicar on earth, who may be, and often has been, a man of no character; not to say utterly unacquainted with the Holy Spirit of God?

* It is stated that one day a Pope of Rome was walking through the grounds of the Vatican, and enjoying the sight of the riches which are there, and turning to the Cardinal who accompanied him, he said, "The days are passed when the successor of Peter can say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "Yes," replied his companion, "and so also are the days when he can say, 'In the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk.'" Whether this conversation ever actually occurred or not, the truth is exactly as is there indicated.

Whose only thought of that Spirit is that by some means, mostly mechanical, He is transmitted from bishop to priest, and so on in order that an unbroken succession of persons may exist, to continue so to transmit Him, and that effect may be given to a sacramental religion? No. Rome is not such a Church, as we have just seen; she is at the very antipodes of such a Church.

Where, then, shall we search? In the Protestant Churches of England, Scotland, Germany, and other places? Alas! here, too, *we are doomed to disappointment;* too many of these Churches, while protesting against Rome, have adopted many of her practices and many of her doctrines; indeed, in some of them some of the very men who are paid to defend their doctrines from Romanising influences are using the powers and opportunities of their position—a position with which they were entrusted that they might hold it as a rampart against the encroachments of Rome—some of these men are using these powers and opportunities in such a way that Rome is now overspreading England and Scotland, where the martyrs' blood was shed in the struggle for freedom to worship *the Living God* according to His own Word. And it is well known that Romanising clergy abound in these Churches.* Here, too, the figments of sacerdotalism and sacramentalism are apparent; but if one of the leaders of these Churches were asked whether the Holy Spirit controls the congregations, he would be puzzled; for although the Holy Spirit is believed in as a doctrine, yet *His living power* within the Church, and within the individual christian, as an actual fact, *is unknown*, except to the few. There was no hierarchy in the primitive christian Church; now, even in Presbyterianism there is a thinly disguised form of it. Dr. John Cunningham says, "There are seven religious usages

* I think it right here to express my gratitude to Sir Robert Anderson for the excellent work he has done in exposing much of the evil above referred to. I particularly refer to *The Bible and Modern Criticism*, *The Buddha of Christendom*, and *The Silence of God*; for while I regret the conclusion he draws as to God's silence, I would be unfair to him if I did not say that in the greater part of that book, and leaving out only the conclusion referred to, and the statements, historical and others, in which he has displayed less than his usual accuracy, he has done yeoman service to the cause of God.

called Sacraments in the Church of Rome, two in the Protestant Churches, and in the New Testament none."* No, not here either can we find the counterpart of the primitive Church.

Where then shall we seek? Among the sects and denominations which are not included in the terms used above, such as Independents, Baptists, Methodists of the various kinds, the Catholic Apostolic Church, Brethren, and others? Perhaps nothing is more saddening than a review of the rise and decline of most of these bodies. Some of them, notably the Catholic Apostolic Church and the Brethren—nicknamed the "Plymouth Brethren"—whose separation from the surrounding Churches was marked and accompanied by *a splendid testimony* to the power of God as a Living God, and to the Presence, power, and activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the individual believer—seemed for a time to be about to restore to the Church of modern days some of the glory of the Church of primitive times, as indicated in the words several times quoted by Paul, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord"; *but where are they to-day?* The very existence of these separate bodies, as separate bodies, shows that not here either can we find the counterpart of the Church of the New Testament. That was the Church as God made it—what we have to-day is the Church as man has made it; and we have here again a solemn lesson on the old story, "God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions," and, to use the words of an author who sees from the outside, "Man is to-day groping after a lost Christianity."†

And how has all this happened? How comes it that in all the Churches of to-day there is *no resemblance to the Church* as it appeared at the first? This change, or these changes, did not occur suddenly; some of them were of slow growth, and only obtained foothold after a struggle on the part of those who stood for primitive purity. A review of some of these struggles would be interesting and useful, and would shed a brilliant light on the alleged "Silence of God."

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* *The Growth of the Church*, p. 165.

† Marie Corelli: *The Master Christian.*

CHAPTER XII.

FROM THE FIRST CENTURY TO THE PAPACY.

EVEN while the apostles lived we find much to disappoint us, and much to warn of the times of evil which were coming. Speaking to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, Paul points to the danger awaiting them. Grievous wolves, he said, would enter in among them, not sparing the flock, and even of themselves should men arise and draw away disciples after them (Acts xx. 29, 30), and the Lord Himself had also warned His disciples to beware of false prophets coming in sheep's clothing (Matt. vii. 15), and the Apostle John, in his first epistle, speaks of some who went out from them (1 John ii. 19); and in the third epistle mentions Diotrephes as loving to have the pre-eminence (3 John i. 9). This love of pre-eminence seems to have been the fault which caused most mischief all through the ages, culminating *in the Pope of Rome.* It would seem to be the very essence of the apostasy. Then came doting about questions, and strifes of words, then envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings (1 Tim. vi. 3-5); and some, we are told, put away faith and a good conscience, and others made shipwreck concerning the faith (1 Tim. i. 19, 20). To the Corinthians, Paul writes that he could not speak to them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal (1 Cor. iii. 1), and he shows the origin, or at least, one of the proofs, of the carnal mind, in the divisions which already threatened to *spoil the peace and unity* of the Corinthian Church; and he desires the Romans to mark those who are causing the divisions among them (Rom. xvi. 17, 18). Peter, in his second epistle, tells us that there would *be false teachers* among the christians, who would privily bring in damnable heresies, and that many would follow their wicked ways (2 Pet. ii. 1, 2); and Jude speaks of them who had already

crept in unawares: ungodly men; turning the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude i. 4); and later he designates them as sensual; having not the Spirit (Jude i. 19). James, too, seems to refer to actual envy and strife working mischief in the Church (James iii. 14, 16).

These Scripture statements and warnings prepare us to learn what historians have to tell us, and to find that the course of the Church was not constantly upward, as some would have us believe. De Pressensé, writing of the first century, says, "Formalism had crept into the Church; piety had become a mere sound of words; a deceptive appearance; *a purely intellectual belief;* with no power over the heart; theory without practice; faith without works; worldly distinctions had been introduced into the Church; the poor were slighted, while the rich were courted."* Further on he says, "The bond of brotherliness was broken by the spirit of envying and pride; the christians of Corinth began to dispute about their secular interests with as much acrimony as their religious views; . . . the recognition of *the equality of believers in the Sight of God* was lost as brotherly love declined; worldly distinctions began to assert themselves."†

It is no matter of surprise that after these things the Church should have been torn into shreds by the conflicting doctrines taught by the leaders of the various parties in the Church; or that these conflicts should have resulted in the creation of *a ruling caste* who overrode the majority, ultimately claiming that their authority over the Church was a Divine arrangement, until at last the Church, having entirely forgotten the ways of the Lord, should have forgotten also the *leading power of the Holy Ghost;* and instead of following the injunction of the Master, to take no thought how or what they should speak or say when delivered up to governors and rulers for His sake (Matt. x. 18, 19, 20), they followed the example of Israel when they demanded a king, and took refuge in skilfully prepared apologies and polemical dissertations, until only a few voices could be heard telling out

* *The Early Years of Christianity*, "The Apostolic Age," p. 203.

† *The Early Days of Christianity*, "The Apostolic Age," p. 210.

the truth that *the Holy Spirit still lived*, and these few voices were soon stilled; and even to-day their struggles are not understood. In most of the ecclesiastical histories we now have *they are misrepresented*. The letters to the seven Churches, given us in the second and third chapters of Revelation, also show how the Church was wandering away from God. Whatever were the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitanes, the words uttered about them show that there was in the Church an element of evil so distasteful to the Lord, that He says of it, "Which I hate" (Rev. ii. 6),* and gentle though the words of rebuke addressed to the Church at Ephesus were, yet they were keen, "Thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. ii. 4).

False and troublesome doctrines invaded the Church, and some persons there were who maintained that christians might safely indulge all their libidinous desires, and that there was no moral difference in human actions (Mosheim, p. 47).

It would be wearisome and distressing to trace step by step the path trodden by the Church all down the ages, for while one gladly gives testimony to the fact that many *true lovers of the Lord* bore witness for Him, and even laid down their lives for Him, yet the truth is clear that during these ages the course of the Church as a whole was *downwards towards the apostasy*. And in the course of the fourth century, Constantine—who has been called the first christian Emperor of Rome, although some historians say that he died a worshipper of the sun god, and others say that it was not

* It is remarkable that we have not a tittle of evidence of what the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitanes were; and yet authors have written learnedly on their evil doings as if all were known. Mosheim says that "the Saviour taxed them with licentious conduct" (*Eccl. Hist.*, edited by Reid, p. 40). Other historians and some Bible Dictionaries make similar statements—but the only evidence educed in support of this theory is contained in the words in Rev. ii. 14, 15, in which the Lord says, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes." To argue from this that the Nicolaitanes taught and practised what Balaam taught and practised, is as correct as to say that Mosheim wrote a history of the Church, and so also did de Pressensé, and therefore Mosheim and de Pressensé are one.

till near his death that he accepted the christian religion, and none of them say that he accepted the christian's Saviour—finding his empire torn by the contending factions of pagan and so-called christian parties, in order to stop these divisions, called a council at which *a compromise was made* between paganism and nominal Christianity, pagan institutions receiving christian names, and christian verities being smothered under pagan ceremonies. There are few christians to-day who know that our cherished feasts of Easter and Christmas Day have no christian origin, but are purely heathen.*

It was not long after Constantine's wonderful scheme had taken effect that its true result became apparent. The so-called christian Church *ran rapidly down* the path away from God, and we are told that one Bishop of Rome was led to the throne through a sea of blood. Mosheim says, "Often most obstinate and bloody contests took place at Rome when a new pontiff was to be created. . . . A shocking example of this was afforded by the disturbance at Rome, in the year 366, after the death of Liberius. When they came to the choice of a new bishop, one party was for placing Damasus, and another for appointing Ursicinus a deacon over the bereaved Church, and the contention issued in a bloody warfare, in which there was fighting, burning of buildings, and many lost their lives"; and he naively remarks, "I dare not pronounce either of them a good man."† Do we expect to

* These may seem strange statements to make, in the face of the fact that godly men throughout Christendom believe in and hold them as christian festivals; there is, however, overwhelming evidence of the truth of the statements made in the text. The internal evidence is itself sufficient. The very word "Easter" is only the Babylonish form of the name of the Queen of Heaven, spoken of in Jeremiah, to whom the women of Judah insisted on offering cakes in worship. "Ishtar" was pronounced "Eeshtar." And the strange anomaly of the commemoration of a certain eventful day in the world's history by a movable feast should itself strike thinking men. Then the movable feast fits exactly the original purpose, for it is observed on a day near the full moon, and the moon was the object worshipped under the title Queen of Heaven, but with the various names of Venus, Ceres, Astarte, Ishtar, and others. (*The Two Babylons*, by Hislop, pp. 147, 167). Christmas, too, has a similar origin, and has no reference at all to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the 25th of December was a well-established feast of Baal.

† Mosheim, p. 129.

hear the Voice of God or see the *manifestation of His power* through a body like this, be its protestations what they may? Of course not, and yet history shows that there were many, like the prophets of the Old Testament times, and those who had not bowed the knee to Baal, to be found among those of whom the world took no notice, who knew what it was to walk with God, to hear His Voice, and to be certain that He heard theirs. The writings of the christian Fathers, as they are called, contain numerous testimonies to the fact that God *was known to answer prayer*—and that most manifestly, just in the circumstances in which Sir Robert Anderson says He does not. Mosheim says, "It is easier to conceive than to express how much *the miraculous powers* and extraordinary Divine gifts, which the christians exercised on various occasions, contributed to extend the limits of the Church. The gift of tongues appears to have gradually ceased. . . . But the other gifts with which God favoured the rising Church of Christ were, as we learn from numerous testimonies of the ancients, still everywhere distributed,"* and again, after enumerating causes which led to the enlargement of the Church, he says, "To these must be added the *curing of diseases and other miracles* which very many christians still performed by invoking the Name of the Saviour";† and in these things Mosheim is speaking of the third century.

De Pressensé says, "The clear and unanimous testimony of the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries leaves no room to doubt the *continuance of miraculous* power in the Church of that period": and he quotes Tertullian, who says "often the life of a man has been granted to the prayers of the faithful."‡

The ancient Fathers speak in no hesitating terms on this point. Justin Martyr says, "Many of our christian men . . . have healed, and do heal; rendering helpless, and driving the

* Mosheim, p. 54. I prefer to quote largely from Mosheim: First, because he is a well-known recognised authority; second, because he is a careful, temperate, calm, and, of course, very learned writer; and third, because he and his successive editors have collected most of the ancient authorities in their footnotes; but other historians bear out the same statements.

† Mosheim, p. 86.

‡ *The Early Years of Christianity*, "Martyrs and Apologists," p. 14.

possessing devils out of the men."* Irenæus, Tertullian, and Origen give similar testimony. When, however, as one writer puts it:

> Constantine, in days of old,
> Did pour into the Church's lap
> The treasures of the East and West,
> She laid her down and took a nap.

Or rather, having found an earthly asylum where she was free from the persecutions which she had had to endure, having *left the purity of her first love*, and given not only her allegiance, but her affections, to the world, the manifestations of her Lord's gifts became rarer, and more rare, until they vanished from public view, and from the view of historians who only see what the world sees. And the great men began to say that the Lord Who had bestowed the gifts *had taken them back.*

There is one passage of Scripture which is often quoted as if it proved that God had indicated His intention to remove those gifts; that passage of Scripture is as follows, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away" (1 Cor. xiii. 8). Now, this passage mentions only prophecies, tongues, and knowledge, and we have no right to add to the words of the text, and say that the other gifts are included. By every canon of interpretation we are bound to restrict the passage to its contents. Sir Robert will understand the maxim *Expressum facit cessare tacitum*, or *Expressio unius exclusio alterius.* But even if the text is to be permitted a wider scope than its words indicate, the immediate context shows clearly that the gifts mentioned are to cease only when the perfect has come (1 Cor. xiii. 10), that the knowledge which is to vanish away shall so vanish only when we shall know even as we are known.

From the time of Constantine to the Reformation, the lapse of the Church was rapid, and it was remarked that the manifestations of power gradually ceased, until the Church had fallen so far that no historian of the times tells of any miraculous actions. Yet we are not left without *indications*

* Apol. ii., chap. vi.

of the same spirit and power among the people of the Lord in those ages as we find in the early Church. The Waldenses have left on record the fact that God was still a living God, and that those who are spiritual could even then prove that He was *far from silent.*

But it is when we reach the time of Luther, and Calvin, and other mighty men of God through whom He brought about the great Reformation, that the light of history reveals, in all its sadness, the reason why these miraculous powers seemed to have ceased. Up to this time historians, like most other men, supposed that the Church of Rome was in very deed the Church of God; and that nothing unsanctioned by her could be right, while nothing sanctioned by her could be wrong. But the searchlight of God's Spirit, shining through the Reformers, revealed to an astonished world that instead of being what she claimed to be, she was really *properly* described as "*drunken with the blood of the saints*" (Rev. xvii. 6). The ashes of John Huss and his fellow martyrs for the Name of Jesus, seemed to have been wafted over the face of the earth, telling out the truth that Rome had tried by every means in her power to *silence the Voice of God*, when uttered through His chosen ones, and, like the blood of Abel, crying for vengeance on a system that had not only slain the witnesses for God, but in doing so, had enveloped the world in spiritual darkness. And it was when the infamous John Tetzel shamed the reasonable men, even of the world, with his impudent preaching of indulgences, that men saw the depth of depravity to which Rome had sunk, *carrying with her* the people who had trusted her.

God could not (let us speak with reverence and yet with holy boldness here), He could not, following the line He had always adopted, make His Voice heard in the world, as it then was. He had launched His Church pure, powerful, adorned with all the gifts of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ had given gifts to the Church, and He had gone away into the far country to receive to Himself a kingdom, and return; and He had a right to expect the Church to wait for Him, as a bride waits for her absent bridegroom, and to find her watching for His return *decked in the jewels with which*

He had furnished her, but the Church, as an institution, had thrown these gifts behind her back, had chosen the protection of the world, and the decorations and gifts of the world, in preference to those of her Master and Lord, and often when the question arose for decision, Shall it be Christ or the world? she had made her choice, not for God, not for her Redeemer and Saviour, Who had emptied Himself for her, but she had chosen the world, and against God. Again the solemn words reach us from the inspired record, "God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions." Again we are reminded that God at the first endowed man with freedom of will and power of choice, and He always has respected, and He does now respect, that very freedom and power.

But the Reformation was a public event, calculated, if not to compel belief, at least to make men wonder. In Germany *one puny man* contended against all the power of an organisation so perfect, so bitter, so strong as Rome; surely this was a struggle foredoomed to failure; not only to failure, but to absolute disaster! Surely, the only effect of this struggle must be not only to crush the feeble man who dared to engage in it, not only to stifle the impotent voice of the rash man who thought he could cope with such a power, but *to crush every hope* which might arise in any other breast that one day God's side would win. But the struggle did not fail, the man was not crushed; his voice fills the world to-day, and the marvellous way in which that man's life was guarded till his work was done is a *standing rebuke* to the men who say that God has been silent. In view of this almost astounding proof of the loving interposition of God on behalf of His servant, what can we say of the statement, "Heaven has been dumb for eighteen long centuries," that "ever since the days of the apostles the silence of heaven has been unbroken," and that "when the testimony (to Christ?) passed out from the narrow sphere of Judaism . . . that voice (the Voice of God) died away for ever"?*

It is practically admitted that God's Voice was heard in the prophetic dispensation, through the lips of men—and that in

* Sir Robert Anderson's *The Silence of God*, pp. 16, 19.

the time of national apostasy "the Divine Voice was heard" —but the truth that the Divine Voice was heard through the lips *of Martin Luther* and many others about the same time, is lost sight of. These men had practically the same message as the old prophets, with the addition of the new message of the Gospel, and *the power* by which they spoke *was the same* as that which actuated the prophets of old. We are told that miraculous powers and prophetic gifts abounded in the Pentecostal Church, but men seem to fail to realise that the prophetic gifts were the expression of *the same power* as that which filled the old prophets, the same Holy Spirit Who is in the Church to-day; and he grievously errs who says that the Divine Voice was heard with increasing clearness in the old dispensation; if by that he means that those who heard the prophets deliver their message, and who believed, accepted, and obeyed it, increased in number or influence, or that Israel's or Judah's path was shaped by that message.

Were not the captivities of Assyria and of Babylon direct results *of the rejection* of the message which the Divine Voice delivered? Was not the national apostasy continued in spite of that Divine Voice? Would the record of God's message ever have reached us in these days of Gospel light had it been left to the mighty men of the world to preserve it and communicate it to us? Certainly not. God had His purpose in preserving His precious revelation, and one part of that purpose was to preserve for us of to-day evidence of the fact that God did "at sundry times and in divers manners, speak unto the fathers by the prophets." Few were they among Israel and Judah who knew of the prophetical Voice, fewer still heard it, *and still fewer* were they who believed and obeyed it. True it is that in the midst of national apostasy and sin, persisted in in spite of the warnings of the Divine Voice—that Voice continued, and mighty works were done; but it is also true that if we were compelled to gather all our information about God's ancient people from the uninspired historians of those days, even though those historians might have been the religious leaders of the people, we would have remained unaware of the mighty truth that God *had* spoken.

We may judge by the religious historians of these latter ages, whose efforts seem to be increasingly bent in the direction of *eliminating everything* that tells of the Divine or supernatural; and as human nature is the same, and has been the same in all ages, we know that the Divine and supernatural would have been eliminated from the story of Israel, except so far as it suited the historians to introduce the superstitious; and the loving Lord found it necessary to give us His own inspired story, with all its variations, with the record of His own tender callings, and of Israel's rejection of His call. And if ever the same loving, tender, but faithful Holy Spirit should find it necessary to record the doings of the faithless formal Church and His own faithful witnesses His history would be full of the doings and sayings of the men who lifted up their voices against the increasing worldliness, and coldness, and *apostasy of the professing Church* of God, and of their warnings and teachings, and of their efforts to lead men back again into the fellowship of God, which they were fast losing, ay, and losing the taste for.

Many names almost forgotten, indeed wholly forgotten by the historian, would appear on the page of the world's story as messengers through whom the Divine Voice spoke, and through whom mighty works were done. Many true witnesses for Jesus, like the two young men of Lyons, whose very names are lost to us, but who preached salvation through a Crucified and Risen Saviour without the aid of sacerdotal and sacramental ceremonies, and were charged falsely by the priests of that day, and city, with teaching "Manichæism," and upon that charge were burned at the stake; many like them would be found, honoured with a place in the record *as prophets of God* in the new dispensation. Why did John Huss perish in the flames? Was it because he spoke out a message from himself? No, but because the *Voice of God spoke through him*, and men refused the Voice and the message, as well as the messenger. And John Huss was not alone. There were many others of whom the world was not worthy, and of whom it took no notice, or not sufficient notice to record the fact that they lived and taught; they were *so out of touch* with the prevailing religious trend of thought, that

they were despised and scorned. It was so much easier to condemn than to consider their message. But the Lord has all their names in *His book of remembrance*, and one day that book will be shown, and what a revelation it will be. Men will learn from it that God has been speaking, and speaking loudly, *but they have not heard*, having become dull of hearing.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ERAS OF THE PAPACY AND THE REFORMATION.

BUT what was this institution which Luther and his fellow workers, known to him and unknown, attacked? It claimed to be the mouthpiece of God. It claimed that the Pope was God's vicar on earth. No person could preach the Gospel, the glad, good news of Salvation, to a world ruined by sin, through a Saviour Who came down from heaven for the purpose. No one was permitted to do this, unless this institution, called, and calling itself, the Church, gave him leave. Men might perish, although "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish" (John iii. 16), if the Church did not permit the Gospel of that Salvation to be preached. No man, *however fitted for the work* of preaching, however he might burn with desire to preach it, was allowed to do so unless the Church gave sanction. To preach this Gospel without sanction was to incur the wrath of God's vicar on earth—the blood of the Albigenses and Waldenses furnishes proof enough of this. This prohibition would have been *wicked and oppressive* even if Rome had tried her best to send the Gospel by accredited messengers to those who were in darkness, but she did not; instead of this she reigned as lord over God's heritage, and for the bread of the Gospel she gave an almost infinite variety of pagan customs, rules, observances, sacerdotal rites, and sacramental holiness, and the *Book of God was lost sight of*, except by the very few.

Salvation was offered as the reward of works, often of the silliest kind, and sometimes of a revolting kind. One cannot help looking with wonder at Luther as he painfully climbs the "Scala Santa" at Rome, long after he had been brought

out of the utter darkness in which he had found himself, through Rome's teaching—nor can one help asking what one so enlightened as he could hope to gain from such a work, but we must remember *that Rome had taught him*, and it was she who was responsible for whatever there was of the unreasonable or improper in his act. And if we see Luther there with all the light he had obtained up to that time, what must have been the spiritual state of the vast multitude, who did not see so clearly as he did? Sunk in a darkness which has well earned for those days the title of "The Dark Ages." And yet when this darkness was creeping on, and after it had reached its darkest point, Rome was in her glory, responsible for it all. No, the story of salvation through a Crucified Risen Saviour would not suit her hierarchy, and she would not preach it, nor allow others to do so. The state of morals, too, had fallen as low as the spiritual darkness might lead us to expect. There is no need to dwell upon or prove this truth. It is well known, and even in the pages of Roman Catholic historians, is stated *unhesitatingly and clearly*. The multitude and their spiritual (?) leaders did not want God, and would not listen to His Voice. Man made his choice, and God let him go. He still respected the freedom of will which one may say distinguishes man from the rest of creation.

Early in the history of the christian Church a hierarchy had begun to form itself. The bishops or elders—who were the same persons*—and of whom there were several in every Church, began to exercise and claim authority over the rest; this extended to passing judgment as to the persons who were qualified or unqualified to preach or teach; *then came usurpation of powers by one or more strong men; then* the claim of one man to authority over several Churches instead of God's order *of several men in one Church;* then the claim of one man to be head of all the Churches; and all these claims were based on carnal arguments, and produced carnal rulers, over whom the Word of God had no power; until the man who could buy the largest number of votes, or silence—by

* This is well established, and all writers on the subject, Anglican as well as others, admit it.

murder sometimes—the largest number of opponents, occupied the seat which was supposed to be that of *God's vicar on earth*. God could not, He did not, speak through such an institution as this. There were men then, as there were in the dark ages of Israel, who knew His Voice, even as in Elijah's time there were those who had not bowed the knee to Baal; but as in that time the faithful ones were almost unknown—were indeed quite unknown—to all but God Himself, so those of the dark ages were almost unknown, yet here and there *through the pitchy darkness* can be seen the glimmer of a lonely light, which is borne by one who still knows how to hold forth the Word of Life, telling us that God had not withdrawn Himself. And while we gaze on *the lonely star* thus shining in the darkness, we seem to hear that wonderful Voice of God, saying, as He did to Israel, "And therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you" (Isa. xxx. 18).

It was against such an institution as this that Luther hurled his thunderbolts; and when we think of his success we are astonished—astonished that in so short a time so much could have been done, and we are constrained to say that this was not wholly the work of man. No one would have been readier than Luther himself to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give the glory." But marvellous as the work was, it can hardly be fairly said that we must accept it as perfect. Reformation of a thing *so utterly astray* and out of touch with God, was hardly what God required; certainly was not what man needed. Popery could not be reformed. Priestcraft is entirely foreign to the genius of Christianity; Sacramentalism has no place in the Gospel; State Churchism is impossible in a Church on the New Testament plan; and any movement which leaves any one of these things as an integral part of the arrangements of a Church as God would have it *has failed*.

You cannot have a pope without permitting him to claim to be the medium of communion between the Church and God, and you cannot have a priest without allowing his claim to the same place between the individual soul and God. But the Holy Spirit Himself, in His great grace, condescends to take the place of

Mediator in both these cases, and thus the human mediator is *not only useless*, but pernicious, for when the human mediator is resorted to, God is again forsaken, and His Voice is unheard.

The sacramental idea is that by some means God conveys or permits spiritual blessing, through the performance of some rite performed by a man qualified by another man for the purpose; and this, independent of the question of the spiritual fitness of the men. This idea is vague, *altogether too vague for the soul* who sincerely desires communion with God, such as He offers in His Word, and thus, in addition to many other evils, it creates a disappointment of heart which frequently results in discouragement, which again ultimately turns the seeker after God away from the path altogether. And, in addition to the vagueness of the idea, the system is mechanical; while the christian life, to be real, must be spiritual. Who believes, for instance, that the sprinkling of a few drops of water on the face of a child, or the immersing in water of a more mature person, does or can make the subject *a child of God?* Who is there that really believes that the person operated on is by the act born again, or as the original passage reads (ανωθεν, *anōthen*), from above? No one. It may be accepted as a doctrine, because it is found in a Church creed, but no reasonable person with an idea of the *immensity of the change* involved in that birth from above can in his heart believe it. Yet God is supposed to be, shall we say bound? at least ready, at all times to ratify the act, and perform a miracle of regeneration, although priest, parent, child, or more mature person, may all be and remain unconverted. If this is so, God surely is *not silent*, and if it is not so, and the efficacy of the rite is entirely independent of God, then again *God is ignored* and forsaken for the human mediator, who is supposed to be clothed with power to perform a miracle greater than any physical change requires. Thus sacramentalism withdraws men's thoughts from God, and unfits them for listening for, and hearing, and obeying, the Divine Voice.

The essence of "State Churchism" is the appointment and maintenance of a hierarchy appointed by the State, with authority to teach such doctrines and practices as it may choose,

and with power to enforce at least outward, or apparent, belief in and obedience to these doctrines and practices; and what is more important and more pernicious still, to permit such men as it chooses, and forbid all others, to carry and proclaim the good news of salvation; and this is assuming that this hierarchy will send or permit men to preach these good tidings—and as to that, let the bloodstained hills of Scotland, and of England, too, bear witness to the fact that a Protestant Church, the Church of England, can require the secular power to prohibit *even the reading of the Bible* by the godly peasantry of the two countries, putting to a cruel death those who were found thus engaged, overrunning the country as if it were a hostile, conquered state, and hunting to the death the men who persisted in preaching Christ to their countrymen. It will be said that the Church of England does not now do such things; no, she does not, not because she would not, but because she cannot. One need only examine the attitude of the hierarchy of the English Church over the late Education Bill to see what she would do if she could. It is gladly admitted that there are many men in that hierarchy who would not persecute, but this is not because of their position, but in spite of it, for the very idea of a *State Church is opposed* to liberty of conscience and freedom in religious matters, and this opposition is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament and to the Spirit of God. And this hierarchy operates against God in yet another way, for unless He will condescend to speak through the regularly ordained clergy, who may be unfit, these very clergy will prevent Him from speaking through other channels, and so again God's Voice becomes unheard.

These things—popery, priestcraft, sacramentalism, and State Churchism—cannot be reformed, they must be abandoned. Popery, it is true, is gone—perhaps for ever. Even in the lands which own its sway the Pope is not what he once was; but those things from which the popedom sprang still remain, and the Reformed Church has not purged itself from the other evils above mentioned. A State Church, with its hierarchy state-supported, and with its tendency to sacramentalism, has within it *all the elements* needed, at a fitting time, to

produce a new pope. Indeed, Dr. John Cunningham, in his book already cited, although a Presbyterian minister, does not hesitate to say, "The papacy is the highest development of ecclesiastical polity."*

And all these were left in the Reformed Church, and these, the very causes, which were chiefly instrumental in making the ears of God's people dull of hearing, were left in operation, and continued their work. It would perhaps be too much to say that Luther was not to be blamed for leaving these elements of evil in his Reformed Church. That is a matter for his Master, and not for us; but it is not too much to say that it does not pertain to us to lay the blame upon Luther's shoulders. Born and educated in the midst of spiritual darkness, such as prevailed in his day; taught to revere the Pope and the clergy *as almost superhuman* beings, certainly as beings far above the common people—some of the writers of the Dark Ages went so far as to derive the word "laity" from the Greek λαας, *lāas*, a stone, and to say that the laity were only like the stones under the feet of the clergy—it would have been surprising if he had been able to endure the full blaze of the Gospel light; indeed, there are few even now who can bear it.

Yet, while we offer our gratitude to God for the great work which Luther and the other men of his age wrought under God, and the bright light which was shed on God's way with man, still, the fact remains that the Reformation was an incomplete work, and that the very things left undone were those which were necessary to enable men to enter into that fellowship with God which *the apostasy had abandoned* and practically destroyed. That access to the very Presence chamber of God, which is spoken of in so many passages of Scripture, and with so much clearness in the New Testament, in such words as these, "Ye who sometime were far off are made nigh"; "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father"; "We have boldness and access with confidence" (Eph. ii. 13, 18; iii. 12); "God . . . hath quickened us together with Christ . . . and hath raised us up

* *Growth of the Church*, p. 76.

together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies, in Christ" (Eph. ii. 4-6); "Having boldness to enter into the holiest . . . let us draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith" (Eph. ii. 13, 18; iii. 12). That access had been unknown to the multitude for ages; *and remains unknown* to the multitude still. Yet it was the right of every believer, and was within reach of every believer; but few, if any, knew that it was so. This ignorance—while it altered the effect of this truth upon and with regard to men because, not knowing it, they did not avail themselves of it—did not alter its effect with regard to God, Who was always ready and *willing to be approached* by the simple-minded believer through the Way which He Himself had appointed—through the Lord Jesus Christ—by the Spirit. Men's appointments had blocked the way for the individual believer, and he, led by his ignorance, had reached the point at which he believed that God could be approached, only, or almost only, by means of these appointments and ceremonies; and the truth that each individual believer could approach Him for Himself, and enjoy sweet fulness of fellowship *unaided and also unhindered*, was too bright a joy, too wonderful a truth for those so long unused to such thoughts. But man's unbelief had not altered God, nor His attitude towards men. He was still ready and willing to bestow this blessing in His own way; and surely man must admit that His way is best. But *if men will not have it in His way*, is it reasonable for fallen, fallible, sinning man, to dictate to God, or require Him to give His blessing in their way? No, and when He has revealed His way, if men have refused to follow it, is it not the height of unreason for them to expect the blessing?*

Luther knew that God had not become silent. Hear his prayer at the bedside of Melancthon. Melancthon, we are

* It is not suggested that God has bound Himself not to bless unless He is approached in the way He has ordained. God is, of course, sovereign and free, and has often met the sincere seeker, though seeking in an unauthorised way. He met Cornelius, but He sent His messenger to show him the way of life, and He has met and blessed many others, who in their ignorance sincerely sought Him in ways which might be called unauthorised; but men with their Bibles within reach have no right to expect Him to do so.

told, was about to die. His eyes were set, his consciousness almost gone, his speech and hearing had failed, his face fallen, he knew no one. After viewing his poor friend for a little while, Luther turned away and called upon God to restore him; then taking Melancthon's hand, he told him to be of good courage, saying, "Thou shalt not die," and he did not. Writing about this afterwards, Melancthon said, "I should have been a dead man had I not been recalled from death itself by the coming of Luther," and Luther himself said, "I found him dead, but by an evident miracle of God he lives." It may be objected that this narrative refers to two such men as the world seldom sees, and that therefore we have no right to expect a repetition of such things, except in the case of like men; and this may be what Sir Robert Anderson means when he says, "There are no limits to the possibilities of faith," and God may thus declare Himself "at times."* If so, the position taken by him, and it is taken by many others, compels the consideration of two most important questions.

(1) Is God, then, fickle or changeable? Does He do "at times" what He is not willing, in like circumstances, to do at other times? We should require most convincing testimony before we could believe this. His glory *is that He changes not;* and there is not a word in all His Book to warrant the suggestion that He will not do always, in like circumstances, what He has done once; at any rate, if we find in the inspired Word a promise that He will do it. No, our God is not fickle, but faithful to His promises. (2) Is He, then, a respecter of persons? He denies this. Shall we contradict Him? Did the position of Luther and Melancthon in the religious world—to use a hackneyed, but incorrect phrase—or in the work which God had given them to do, entitle them to special recognition? If so, we should, and would, have found some indication of this in God's revelation; but it is silent. God honours and rewards faith, and faith *is simply believing God.*

It may be, and probably is, true that Luther's position in God's work was due to the fact that he believed God more than other men.

* *The Silence of God*, p. 170.

It may be, and probably is, true that he had had more experience of God's faithfulness than other men, and so had learned to trust Him better; and God, Who rewarded Abraham's faith by calling him His Friend, could reward Luther's faith by restoring his dying friend and coadjutor. But faith is *not restricted to the great;* the poor in spirit, whose joy is that theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. v. 3), are more likely to possess that faith in God which can obtain answers to prayer, than the mighty ones of the earth, even though they may be also mighty ones in the Church.

No, our God is neither changeable nor a respecter of of the person of any man, and if there is a promise of God which clearly indicates that God will do a certain thing, the humblest child of God can, and may, lay hold of that promise with as firm a hold and as certain an assurance as could Luther, or any other of earth's great men, ay, or of God's great men. It is true that there are no limits to the possibilities of faith, but our faith is fitful, fickle, changeable, and sometimes, when we are most inclined to believe that our faith is mighty, we are trusting to our faith, having faith in our faith, instead of having faith in God, and so there is often failure when we and others expect success, and the fickleness, changeableness, and failure, are all on our side; but God abideth faithful.

Another similar incident in the life of Luther deserves passing mention here. Myconius, another of his fellow workers, was in the last stage of consumption, and already speechless. He afterwards wrote of himself, "Raised up in the year 1541 by the prayers, and letter, of the Reverend Father Luther, from Death."*

* For a better account of this, see Luthardt's *Moral Truths of Christianity*, p. 298.

CHAPTER XIV.

MORE MODERN TIMES.

HISTORY abounds in proofs that at, and after, the Reformation times, the Hand of God was manifested, and His Voice heard by the faithful few, while to the many, and to the majority of the leaders of the christian Church, He appeared to be silent; and as divine truth permeated faithful souls who remained unsophisticated by the subtleties of the schools, God's interposition in daily affairs was not only known, but expected, and, strange as it may seem, these interpositions occur generally on the lines with regard to which Sir Robert Anderson makes the strongest assertion that God does not, nay, will not interpose. He says, "I dare not say He cannot heal my child, but it is clear that He will not," and yet history is full of narratives of healing. This phase of the subject will be referred to later. But Sir Robert Anderson speaks of public manifestations of God's presence and power, and says, that "for eighteen centuries the world has never witnessed such a manifestation." One cannot help regretting such a statement from such a man; from an enemy of Christ it might be expected, but not from one who is a well-known christian author. From the pen of a man like this, the statement can do incalculably more harm than from the other. What will satisfy him? That the Reformation, so far as it went, was a public and manifest work of God, even Sir Robert Anderson may be expected to admit, but it was not short, sharp, and stunning, like a bolt from the blue heavens—no, and neither were the *two captivities* of Israel and Judah. Yet these were public manifestations of God's presence and power; and if God's Voice was heard, and His Hand seen in those captivities, surely that same Voice was heard, and that same Hand seen in the Reformation. But there was one event in

history which perhaps all christian historians will recognise as a manifestation of God's presence and power; and if it was not, many godly hearts have given thanks to God for it as if it was—and they have been all wrong—well, that may be!

When the great Spanish Armada left the shores of Spain and France, to blot out the kingdom and nation of Britain it was well known who it was who directed the counsels of the hostile nations. Britain had, in name at least, become Christian, Protestant. The Name of Jesus Christ the Lord was being nationally honoured, and the enemy must try his best to crush that bold little people, and everyone thought he was going to succeed. Everyone? No, not everyone. God saw the preparation. He saw the mighty fleet, and He knew that thousands of godly hearts were praying to Him *for deliverance.* He heard their cry, ay, and in the winds which howled round Britain's coasts, scattered the ships, and shattered the hopes of the enemy, these godly souls heard God's mighty Voice, and in those angry waves which dashed to pieces the pride and glory of the Armada, they saw His Hand.

And this was a public act, was it not? The whole world *looked on and wondered* whether there could be any escape; and the whole world looked on again, and wondered when they saw how God can protect His own. In view of this mighty act, one might almost look up with confidence into the faces of those who say that God has been silent for eighteen centuries, expecting to hear them say, "Yes, we had forgotten. Our God still sees, and His Ear is still open, and His Hand is still outstretched to deliver even now," And we might expect them, too, to confess that the secret of His *seeming silence* has been unfolded, for God does not reveal himself to unbelieving hearts. Now, as at all former times, unbelief has turned men's hearts and eyes away from the living God, and He has thus been unable to do for them what He would.

But still it is certain that many christian men and women of Britain, and the descendants of Britons, have believed, and continue to believe, that the destruction of the Spanish Armada was a direct and public manifestation of God's presence and power; and their conviction may safely be placed in

opposition to the opinions of those who, to support a theory, deny the existence of any such manifestation; and these can be appealed to, and asked not to permit their attention to be diverted from the other plain facts of history, nor their judgment biased by the reasonings of those who say that the world has never witnessed a public manifestation of His presence and power.*

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* *The Silence of God*, p. 10.

CHAPTER XV.

PROTESTANT TIMES.

HAVING said so much, it might be thought that the object of this essay was gained. Having shown that the fundamental argument is baseless, further consideration is unnecessary; but as the error is far-reaching, and its effects upon the Church have been, to say the least, painfully saddening, it is necessary to go further, and show that, even in these days, and in all the days, from the time of the Armada down, the faithful, trusting children of God have enjoyed proofs of God's presence and *manifestations of His power*. Not the many, however, not the mighty, and not those whom the daily press delights to honour. No, the annals of Britain will be searched in vain, or almost, not quite so, for the story of such proofs and manifestations. Who that has read the tale of our Scottish Covenanters—persecuted to the death by a Protestant Church—can forget the story of Alexander Peden? Hunted one day by dragoons, Peden was in imminent danger of being overtaken and either shot on the spot, as was a common custom, or dragged away to prison, there to languish until his persecutors chose to lead him out to death. He knelt down on the heather-clad hillside and prayed—such a prayer, its like cannot be found in any fashionable prayer book. "O Lord," he said, "if Thou hast ony mair wark for puir auld Sandy ta dae, cast the lap o' Thy cloak aboot him, and shield him frae his enemies."

Everyone has heard of a Scotch mist, and many a silly joke has been cracked about it, but for once at least someone knew a good purpose for it, and puir auld Sandy called it *the lap of God's cloak*. Peden had not long finished prayer, when a hare ran across the path of his pursuers; and, forgetting the chief object of their hunt, they chased the hare for a while till

it escaped; and then they bethought them again of Sandy, but behold! the lap of God's cloak had surrounded him, and, he too, escaped.

The name of John Welch will be familiar to every reader of *The Scots Worthies*—a book written, not by fanatics or men easily swayed by their feelings, but by a canny Scotchman, and the story of his persistent prayer to God for the restoration of a young man who was either dead or believed to be dead, and the answer to his prayer, in the raising up of the young man, will be remembered by all such readers.

The story of the Moravian Brethren also teems with instances of manifest answer to prayer. Count Zinzendorf, whose name appears as the author of some of our sweet Gospel hymns, says, "We have undeniable proof thereof (of the existence of miracles) . . . in the healing of maladies, *in themselves incurable*, such as cancers, consumption . . . . etc., all by means of prayer, or of a single word." Again, "At this juncture, various supernatural gifts were manifested in the Church, *and miraculous cures* were wrought."*

These pages might be crowded with other testimonies to similar facts which occurred at this period, but the few that have been noted will suffice, for if they are believed the question is settled, while if they are disbelieved, the addition of numbers of others would not compel belief, and except for the purpose of showing that these were not isolated cases, no addition of numbers would be of any value; and we shall see others further on.

But why should they not be believed? Sir Robert Anderson admits that they are not inherently incredible; indeed, his position is thus stated, "The great difficulty respecting miracles is not their occurrence, but their absence,"† and he complains that "When we are told that such cures have been achieved by Divine power, we are called upon to refuse even to examine the evidence," and he goes on to say that, "The plain fact is that men do not believe in Divine power or the unseen hand." "Disguise it as we will," he says, "this is the real point of the controversy."‡ Still further, he says, "The

* I have availed myself of the work of Dr. A. J. Gordon, of Boston, *The Ministry of Healing*, but in most, if not in all, cases I have verified his statements.

† Page 24. ‡ Page 28.

Scripture miracles stand on the solid basis which no reason can overthrow. Their possibility cannot be denied without denying the very nature of God as an all-powerful Being. Their probability cannot be questioned without questioning His moral perfection, and their certainty, as a matter of fact, can only be invalidated by *destroying the very foundations* of human testimony."*

Pithier words have seldom been written, and these words apply to all miracles, as much as to the Scripture miracles, for God is unchanged. He is still the all-powerful Being, and His moral perfections remain as they were, so that the possibility and probability of modern miracles are as great as were those of the Scripture miracles; and the only question left is the certainty of their occurrence.

Now, the Scripture miracles are believed upon *human testimony*—why should not the modern? It may be replied that the human testimony to the Scripture miracles was inspired, but clearly this is not so, for inspired testimony is Divine, not human, conveyed through human lips like most Divine messages, but still Divine. Now, grant the possibility of modern miracles, grant that we have greater difficulty to account for their absence than we would have to account for their presence,† and then add the fact that godly men and women *have testified to their occurrence*, and belief in modern miracles is compelled, unless it is shown that these godly men and women were deceived. Now we cannot show that, nor can we know it without examining the evidence. Nay, more, we are not guiltless if, the evidence being available, we ignore it, and refuse to believe, and write or speak as if such evidence did not exist. The attitude of many christian people to this subject is simply one of ignorance—they have not read or heard, and they do not wish to do so, and so they remain untaught.

The question is, as all will admit, a most important one. If God has spoken, and does speak, has acted, and does act, and christian men do not know it, the matter *is much more serious* than it seems to those who remain indifferent. Now, human testimony abounds—and the testimony is that of men and women whose names are high in the esteem of God's

* Page 32. † Vide *supra*.

people, and it is unanimous and unchanging—that God has manifested His presence and power *many times* since the close of the Scripture narrative. Some of this evidence has already been given; more will now follow, but a little recapitulation may be pardoned. Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Clement, and others of the first three centuries agree in the statement that miracles generally, not only miracles of healing, were well known up to the time when the last one of these men wrote. These may suffice for the time—before and up to Constantine's time.

After this time, for public historical purposes, miracles may be said to have ceased; the whole spiritual composition of the Church was then changed, a new era had arrived, and spiritual decay prevailed, with its concomitant evils. In still later times, the Waldenses publicly testified to similar manifestations, and among others were some called, and sometimes calling themselves, "Friends of God," who had learned more than most men of what real fellowship with God is (1 John i), and who spoke out with no uncertain sound, telling how, amid the terrible surrounding spiritual darkness, they had found the Word of God, had received it, cherished it, and discovered *how real is the presence of God*, which that Book promises to those who really desire it, and they tell of miraculous interpositions of God's power in the Middle Ages. The Moravians, and, among others, Count Zinzendorf, the Covenanters, of Scotland, of whom mention has already been made, all tell to a faithless Church what God can and will do for His trusting ones. Will our Presbyterian friends listen? It is said of Robert Bruce that "persons distracted, and those who were past recovery with falling sickness, were brought to him, and were, after prayer by him on their behalf, fully restored from their malady." Of Patrick Simpson, we are told that his wife, who was insane, "raving and blaspheming with demoniacal possession,"* was healed through his prayer.

To come closer down nearer to our own age. Will our Methodist friends read John Wesley? When writing his notes on the New Testament, commenting on Mark vi. 13, he

* *Scots Worthies*, pp. 116, 118.

refers to James v. 14-15, saying, "And the Lord shall heal him; he shall be restored to health, not by the natural efficacy of the oil, but by the *supernatural blessing of God;* and it seems this was the great standing means of healing desperate diseases, in the christian Church, long before extreme unction was used or heard of . . . being used as a means of health." And in another place he says, "Even at this day, in every believer faith has a latent miraculous power, every effect of prayer being really miraculous, although, in many, both because of their own littleness of faith, and because the world is unworthy, that power is not exerted. Miracles in the beginning were helps to faith; now they are the objects of it." "At Leonberg," he goes on to say, "in the memory of our fathers, a cripple that could hardly move with crutches . . . was in a moment made whole" (Mark xvi. 17). And it is well known that many times, in his own experience, he had learned that God was faithful to His word; his journal relates many instances.

Richard Baxter will surely be listened to with respect by all who have read his deeply spiritual work, *The Saint's Rest.* He says, "How many times have I known the *prayer of faith to save* the sick when all physicians have given them up as dead. It has been my own case more than once, or ten times, when means have all failed; and the highest art of *reason* has sentenced me hopeless," and then he goes on to mention a specific case of healing, which was his own experience, and he says, "Many such marvellous mercies I have received, and know that others have received in answer to prayer."

Many other godly men of post-Reformation times could be quoted, all telling out the same story, and one and all telling that the reason for the departure of the miraculous *was want of faith.*

Now what shall our answer be to these things? Are the men to be believed or not? and if not, why not? Are their statements inherently incredible? No, Sir Robert Anderson says that the great difficulty respecting miracles is not their occurrence, but their absence.

It may be admissible here to indulge in a little mental

diversion. It will help to refresh us, after the fatigue which we have just undergone. Given a man, of whose character for truth-telling we are assured, who we know knows his subject and the details of it, and upon whose sanity and good judgment we can and do rely—let this man make a statement to us on the subject which we know he understands. For us to doubt that man's statement is a *psychological impossibility.*

Again, if a man of whose unveracity we are not assured, but who for any reason is entitled to be considered a truth speaker, as for instance, if he has a reputation as a good man, and has supported that reputation by a virtuous life, if this man makes a statement about matters within his knowledge, or which may be reasonably believed to be within his knowledge, it is *utterly unreasonable* to withhold credence from that man's statement, except upon proof of his error. One may hold his judgment in abeyance pending further light, but disbelief in such a case is a disregard of every principle of human confidence, and in the words of Bishop Van Mildert, quoted by Sir Robert Anderson, "It is to destroy the very foundations of all human testimony."

Yet again, if an authority, be it book or man, to which, or to whom, we admit our allegiance, or whose statements we are bound to accept, shall predict or promise any thing or event, and if any person shall tell us that the thing has been given or done, or the event has happened, the presumption is in favour of the statement, both of the authority and of the witness, and reason requires belief, or at the least, suspension of judgment, *certainly not contradiction*, except upon proof.

But given a statement of that authority inherently credible, nay, one which, if true, will remove difficulties, and opposed to which there is not a tittle of evidence, then disbelief or passive unbelief is inexplicable except on the ground of prejudice, and prejudice is a mental vice, a vice that works mischief.

The human mind, like many physical things, is inclined to seek, and follow, the line of least resistance. I once stood by the side of a rapidly flowing river, and as I gazed it seemed to me that the force of that stream was almost great enough to sweep out of its course every obstacle which would impede

or even divert it. I watched a little boat, which two men were trying, with might and main, although with but little skill, to pull against the resistless current, but it was too much for them, and they were beaten. I still followed the river on its course until I saw its waters dash against an immovable rock, which opposed itself to the strongest part of the current, deflected the waters past its side, and entirely changed the course of the rushing river. This was fact, but it was also an allegory. Human thought and human belief are like the rushing, mighty river, and while allowed free course will run in their proper channel so impetuously that the one who attempts to stem the current will fail; but even that stream sometimes meets an obstacle, which not only temporarily stops its career, but turns it aside, and bids it flow away from the old course, and in another direction, a mighty, immovable rock bars the way—all unconsciously, but no less effectively. *Prejudice*—prejudging, forming conclusions without evidence—has more frequently turned aside the current of human thought and human belief than all the attacks which infidels, higher critics, and others have made upon the truth; and with prejudice barring the way, the line of least resistance, for the human mind, leads away from the truth, but it leads into darkness.

Now, seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, why should we not believe them? Their story is inherently credible, it is what we might have expected, it removes the great difficulty which those who believe the Bible feel respecting miracles. The witnesses have a *reputation for veracity*—we may not be assured that their character as truth speakers is established (but certainly one who judges them on this matter undertakes a grave responsibility), yet they have a reputation for veracity, they knew the circumstances certainly better than we of the twentieth century can. They have not been convicted of want of judgment, or unsoundness of mind, and their statements are not contradicted. Let the stream of human thought and human belief flow unhindered, and *they will bear us resistlessly* to the conclusion that God has not been silent these eighteen centuries, that heaven has not been dumb, and that

signs, wonders, and miracles continued to occur until the eighteenth century (whether they have occurred since, we shall see later). But, alas, that stolid, solid rock, prejudice, all unconsciously bars the way, and man is robbed of a mighty blessing, and God is robbed of much thanksgiving and praise.

CHAPTER XVI.

LATER MODERN TIMES.

THIS little effort would be incomplete if nothing was said of the occurrence of miracles in the *nineteenth century*, and up to the present day It may be true, it is unfortunately too true, that the large bodies of christians, large and popular churches, and most, if not all, the popular religious journals, and the popular leaders of those churches, and editors of those journals, agree in endeavouring *to suppress any movement* which seems to indicate an unusual manifestation of Divine power; and disbelief, contradiction, contumely, and abuse, have been freely distributed by the leaders of religious thought, as they love to be considered, to those who have dared to say that God has proved Himself, and is to-day proving Himself, as near to His saints as ever He was, and as mighty to deliver. Men will oppose higher critics and other infidels, but they will do so without railing and with calm judicial argument; and perhaps this should be so; and false doctrines of every sort may be exposed, but they will be tolerated. Men may use their opportunities, their social and religious influence (which are given them because they are expected to maintain and uphold the truth). Men may use all these in subverting the belief of their hearers. The Atonement, even as a doctrine, may be disbelieved, and as a fact denied. The divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ may be openly doubted, and doctrines may be taught which are utterly inconsistent with His divinity; and the inspiration of the Scriptures may be laughed at. Men may write books "In Relief of Doubt," which relieve doubt only by removing the truth doubted, and the opposition to all this may be strong, but must be calm, or it will not be tolerated.

And if anyone, jealous for the truth, shall do his duty, and

endeavour to stop the current of unbelief being thus fostered, he is at once blamed by the popular leaders, and the cry "heresy hunt" is raised against him, while the worst that happens to the teacher of the objectionable doctrine, who is, perhaps, undermining our confidence in some of the fundamental truths of the Gospel, may be, that the subverter of the faith is kindly asked to say that he didn't mean any harm, and that there is nothing in his teaching or his book which is really opposed to the standard of the Church, and all is well. He may still hold his place as an honoured divine and he may draw his emoluments and continue to teach error. Ay, and let a man tell out the glorious truth that God is not changed, and that He will do as He says He will. If that man will only stop short at saying that God *will* do, but be careful not to say that God *is doing*, men will tolerate him. Of course, they will argue against him, and in a half-hearted way oppose him but as it is only a doctrine he preaches, his doctrine will just be placed with other rejected doctrines. And of himself it will perhaps be said that "we must bear with him." But let that man go a little further, and say that *God is actually now* showing His presence and power, and that miracles are now occurring—or rather, for this is the better phrase, being wrought by a faithful promise-keeping God—and that He is willing now to show Himself to one and all who will obey Him, and keep His conditions, as the same faithful promise-keeping God, and the attitude is at once changed from passive toleration to active hostility. His words will be misstated, his motives mis-judged, and weapons which men would blush to use in any other cause will be used to discredit him.

The lesson taught in Eden has been too well learned, and though men to-day may be willing to admit that God has promised, they are at the same time ready to say that *He does not perform.* One feels a sinking at the heart when he proposes to submit to an age such as this the proofs of God's present manifestations of His Presence and power, proofs which in any other case, and on any other subject, would compel belief, but which in this case seem to excite ridicule and opposition; with some, not with all. Many to-day are enjoy-

ing in their own bodies, and many others in those of the friends near and dear to them, the experience of the *certainty of the faithfulness* of a promise-keeping God, but with some, who are often among the mighty ones of the Church, an air of superior knowledge and wisdom is assumed, which enables them to *sneer at the evidence*, and suggest that it is the creation of minds, of course, much inferior to theirs—hysterical people, weak women, easily led by their feelings—whose minds are a little unhinged, and so on.

One writer is good enough to say in this connection, "Nothing is more fallacious than the evidence of the senses."* It would be well if this learned gentleman could, and would, tell us what other evidence we have, and by what means information can be conveyed to us. If one sees, say, a cancer or a tumour, surely he can trust his eyes. If not, where will we go for information as to visible things? True, he may not be scientifically correct. What he sees may not be a cancer or tumour, but if he sees what he believes to be the one or the other, and soon after sees that it has disappeared, he can, and must, trust his eyes. If he sees a wound or an open running sore, though he may not be able to name it scientifically, yet he must trust his eyes, and if, shortly after, he sees that wound or sore is healed, he must trust his senses; he cannot help it. If one feels pain, surely he knows it, and no one apart from himself can confidently, or at least with certainty, say he does not feel it. Stay! this is a mistake. Some super-eminent men, who do not wish to believe that another is suffering, can be confident enough in denying it.

When a boy at school, a common remark among fellow-scholars, when one of them met with an accident, which, of course, often occurred, was, "Oh, that's nothing; I don't feel it. I wouldn't feel ten times as much in the same place" (the same place being, of course, the other boy's injury), and our wise counsellor, who does not feel another's pain, of course cannot believe that that pain is real, it is some fancied pain, a delusion. Well, he is kind. We shall try to profit by his information and avoid feeling fancied pain. This author is

* A. J. L. Gliddon: *Faith Cures*, p. 143.

not a Christian Scientist, he does not know enough of their teaching to be one, but he unconsciously *takes their very position.* The Christian Scientist says there is no pain—the idea that there is pain is a delusion, etc., and Mr. Gliddon says the same when speaking of the pain said to be felt by other people of which he knows nothing, and can know nothing.

Then Sir Robert Anderson, following the lead of many others, in judging other people, without any evidence at all, goes a little further and says, "Religious miracles also claim a passing notice here. I do not allude to the tricks of priests, but to extraordinary cures from serious illness, and some at least of these appear to be supported by evidence sufficient to establish their truth."* Is not this a startling admission from one who had previously written, "I dare not say He cannot heal my child, but it is clear He will not"? If some of these cases of extraordinary cures are "supported by sufficient evidence to establish their truth," and these cures are, or were, miracles, it is clear that miracles have not ceased, and *God's Hand is still apparent*, and His Voice is still heard, and it is not clear that He will not heal that child. That child is *not specially excepted* from God's mercy, and those who were healed were not specially favoured of God, for He is no respecter of persons.

But when Sir Robert Anderson goes on to say, "The phenomena of hysteric and mimetic disease will probably account for the majority of cases of the kind,"* and "the vast majority of seemingly miraculous cures may thus be explained on natural principles," and again, "the annals of faith-healing, as it is called, are rich in cases of mimetic or hysterical disease," and between these two latter statements places this, "There are no limits to the possibilities of faith, and God may thus declare Himself *at times*," one cannot help saying that he evinces a confusion of thought in dealing with the subject he has chosen, which is almost inconceivable in such a man; but before saying more or dealing further with this phase of the subject, a moment must be given to another

* Appendix, i.

statement of Sir Robert Anderson's, "I may add that among christians it is pestilentially evil to make the exceptional experience of some the rule of faith for all. The Word of God is our guide, and not the experience of fellow christians, and when this is ignored, the practical consequences are disastrous." Words could not have been more fitly chosen: the surprise is to find them where they are used to destroy their own power. The Word of God is clear and unambiguous, *a simple reader* would find no difficulty if the experience of christians was not offered to contradict its words.

A little child could not have made Sir Robert Anderson's discovery that the Divine Voice died away for ever when the testimony passed out from the narrow sphere of Judaism. That little child would read Mark xvi. 14-18, and, looking round, would expect to see the signs there promised, and he could find nothing in the whole Word to tell him that those promises were untrue,* or carelessly framed, or withdrawn—not a word. He would look at the promises of God with regard to prayer in, say, Matthew xviii. 19-20, and he would expect the Lord to make good His promise; he would see John xiv. 12, and instead of being ready to limit the scope of these words, as Sir Robert Anderson says we all are, he would remember the Almighty *power of a Living God*, and expect; he would read the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and would expect the same Lord to act in the same way to-day. Ah, yes! but then he is only a little unsophisticated child, and he thinks that *God is still speaking*, by His Word. What a pity he should be so deceived; but—is he deceived? Was it not the Lord Jesus Himself who said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"? (Matt. xi. 25). If, then, a simple-minded christian now takes these promises, and others, such as John xiv. 13; xv. 7; James v. 14-16, and believes that these promises are still yea and amen in Christ, and relying on these precious words obeys the Lord and trusts Him, and receives

* Of course, exception will be taken to the authenticity of this Scripture, and I would again warn christians against the so-called higher criticism which would rob them of it.

an answer such as he expects, *is his an exceptional* experience? Well, he may be an exceptional christian, for it is admitted on all hands that such faith is rare, but who can say that his experience is exceptional, for he has only received what the Book of God shows is to be expected by every one.

Alas, that such christians *should be so rare*, and that such faith should be so exceptional. If they were less rare, and confidence in God and His word more general, we would cease to speak of such experience as exceptional.

How stand the facts? We find in inspired Scripture these words, "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father Which is in heaven. For (γαρ, because) where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 19-20), and again, "Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it" (Mark xi. 22, 23), and yet again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son," "If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it" (John xiv. 12-14), and still again, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7), and once more, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you" (John xvi. 23)* and some simple-minded christians believe that the Word of God is our guide, and not the experience of fellow christians, and they *get the answers* to their prayers, which that Word leads them to expect.

Shall we say that their experience is exceptional? Certainly not. It is according to rule, although, alas, many—the

* I do not stop here to discuss the position, generally assumed, that these words were addressed and intended to apply to the twelve disciples alone. This is one of the artful devices of the enemy to prevent God's people from believing God, and there I leave it now. It is enough for my purpose that a little child could not discover this secret.

great majority of God's children—listen to the Tempter—the archaic Serpent, as he is called in Revelation—the Old Serpent of Eden, who has learnt how to adapt his temptation to the new views and circumstances, and if he cannot now say, "Yea! hath God said?" he can say, "Oh, yes, God has said, but *not to you*," and believing him, the great majority of christians *disbelieve God*, put His Word away from them, and miss the blessing, and then they expect and ask other christians to accept their experience against God's Word, and are surprised if any of their fellow-christians prefer that Word to their experience.

Yet another word is needed before we return to the statement about hysteric and mimetic disease. Sir Robert uses the phrase "faith-healing," and in doing so shows that he has not *made himself acquainted* with the subject he believes he is handling. During the early times of a movement among God's children, which has spread with a rapidity, surprising to the soul who does not experimentally know the joy of such a communion with God as is involved in the habit—if we may call it by that name—of receiving answers to prayer, and which has brought health and joy to many a heart and home, the movement which brought christians to believe that God hears and answers prayer for bodily healing—during the early years of this movement the phrase "faith-healing" was much used, and little fault could be found with the word or phrase, so far as it alone was concerned, but it was soon discovered that a *false meaning* was imported into it by those who did not understand the people who were using it. Unspiritual men, for there are even christians who are unspiritual (see 1 Cor. iii. 1), not knowing what faith is, but thinking that it was some faculty of the mind, instead of an attitude of the mind toward God, spoke and wrote as if the healings were claimed by those whom God was using, as their own work effected by some gift, or power of their own, which was under their control, and could be exercised or withheld from exercise at their will.

These unspiritual men seemed to be unable to entertain the thought that God was working in *answer to His children's prayer* of faith, for to very many, after all, God is only a

Theological Entity, and not the Living, Loving, Tender Father to His children. As a universal Father, which He never claims to be, they think of Him; but as One Who is listening for His own child's cry, they know Him not. And so those servants of God, finding that His work was being misunderstood and misrepresented, abandoned the use of the phrase, and for many years have used instead the phrase, "Divine healing," in order to emphasise the truth which they have never ceased to declare that "*it is God Who does* whatever of good is done," and now the phrase "faith-healing" is never used by those who have carefully considered the movement and the sweet and momentous truth upon which it is based.

That truth may without impropriety be repeated here, and it will be found to be, not the collected opinions of those who believe it, but just a simple statement which few, when they examine it, will care to contradict. It is this. (1) *That God's Word is true, whatever man's experience may say to the contrary.* But (2) that Word contains promises that God will answer prayer. (3) That healing of bodily sicknesses is one of the subjects in regard to which such answers are promised; and (4) That *God is faithful*, and that *many* who have trusted Him *have found* that He is faithful. The three first sections probably no one will deny; the fourth rests upon human testimony which is offered for examination, and it is only fair to ask that this testimony be subjected to the same treatment as is accorded to other human testimony; and where that testimony is otherwise unimpeachable it is entitled to better treatment than it receives from Sir Robert when he says, "There *may perhaps be* some which are genuine miracles." But this may receive attention later. No one properly speaks of "faith-salvation," although salvation is received by faith, and so with healing, it is received by faith, as salvation is.

When we read, "The phenomena of hysteria and mimetic diseases will probably account for the majority of cases of the kind" (extraordinary cures); and again, "the annals of faith-healing, as it is called, are rich in cases of mimetic or hysterical disease," we are entitled to *better particulars*, and

some attempt, at least, at proof (with regard to the phrase "faith-healing," see the previous page)—and one is tempted to ask, Who now is forsaking the Word of God as guide, and accepting the experience of fellow christians—no, not even that, but a distorted and misshapen statement of that experience? Certainly not those who say that God is true and faithful, and that *He does what He has promised.*

Now as to mimetic diseases, or hysterical diseases, as Sir Robert seems to think they are the same, seeing he uses first the phrase "hysterical and mimetic diseases," and then "mimetic or hysterical disease." What are these diseases? We ought to know. The word "mimetic" means "mimicking," "given to imitating," "resulting from mimicry." Now where in all the annals of faith-healing, as Sir Robert calls it does he find one case of such a disease? The question is not "Where has he read that there have been such cases?" but "Where *has he himself found one?*" The field in which he has chosen to pursue his researches may contain statements to this effect, but his confidence may have been abused, and no lawyer is ignorant of the worthlessness of hearsay evidence; his informants may have been prejudiced, they may have been interested or otherwise biased. One has heard of good men who, after once having expressed an opinion, *could never be induced* by any evidence of their error to admit they were wrong. His informants may have been such men; at any rate, we are entitled to proof at first hand before we believe what this statement involves, and not a tittle of proof is offered. Let us inquire what it means. Does it mean (1) That christian men and women have been so far bereft of sense, and judgment, and even common intelligence and honesty, that they have actually mimicked disease, and professed, falsely, that they were suffering from it: and then testified that God had healed them? If this is what Sir Robert Anderson means, while one cannot too much admire his courage, in holding and expressing his opinion, it is difficult not to deplore the fact that he has formed so low an estimate of his fellow christians.* But this

* I do not pretend that there have not been counterfeits. It was only in the nature of things that there must be, wherever God's work is

may not be his meaning, although it is thus that most people who use the same phraseology do understand it. Does it mean (2) That these mimetic diseases are real diseases known to the medical profession and listed under this title? Diseases which spring from a disordered state of the nervous system?

If it means this, it is hard to understand why these diseases should be mentioned at all. Why should they be singled out from other diseases? It cannot be because they are more easily conquered than others, and the God Who can heal such diseases as these can with equal ease conquer any other. But perhaps it is not admitted that God does heal even these. If not, why are we told that "the annals of 'faith-healing' are rich in such cases"? and "the phenomena of hysteria and mimetic disease will probably account for the majority of the cases" (of extraordinary cures)? They are cured, that is admitted. By what means? It is said by those who know the facts that they were cured by the power of God, in answer to prayer. If this is not admitted, a reasonable reply should be given to the question: By what means were they cured?

Is it suggested that the state of mind which caused the disease is itself to be credited with the cure? Or, to put it another way, that the mind, by reason of this nervous disorder, has become so weak and ill-balanced that somehow, perhaps by allowing itself to dwell upon the symptoms of some disease, it has actually come to believe that the body is suffering from that disease, and disease actually occurs—this is admittedly possible—but now some one comes by, who says, and proves from God's Word, that God had promised to heal diseases, and this weak, ill-balanced mind believes this, as firmly as it believed the other: and—*mirabile dictu*—the disease vanishes, by the mere power of this weak, ill-balanced mind? And—more wonderful still—because it is weak and ill-balanced. Ah, well! some others would say that this

being done, the arch-enemy is ready, like Pharaoh's sorcerers, to do things like and yet unlike the true, so like the true as to deceive the unwary, and yet always so unlike as to bring reproach upon the true, but this is not Sir Robert's position.

weak one had learnt a sweet lesson which some wiser, stronger-minded ones cannot learn—that God is "faithful Who promised." And, after all, perhaps most people will agree that this is an easier and more reasonable explanation

Yes, "mimetic disease" is a real disease, and, on the authority of the medical profession, its existence may be admitted. And the doctors probably find themselves baffled in their attempts to cure it. It is a mental disease, and if the loving Lord can and does cure this, may we not claim even such a cure as a miracle?

But this does not exhaust Sir Robert Anderson's statement. There are hysteria, or hysterical diseases, yet to be dealt with. No one will for a moment deny that hysteria is a disease, and the parent of diseases, and it is a disease which medical men cannot cure by drugs. If such diseases are healed, as Sir Robert says they are, we should thank God for it, instead of *using the fact to discredit* the truth. But how does he know that these diseases were hysterical? Before making his statement he should have made quite sure, and after making it, he should have given some evidence. Why has he not done so? Sir Robert is a lawyer of experience and skill, and he knows what comment would be made if counsel on one side of a case made statements damaging to the other side, and called no evidence to support them.

Why does Sir Robert not thank God for *the genuine miracles* which he admits may be, and which many reasonable, intelligent christian men say really have been, wrought instead of endeavouring to turn men's minds away from these genuine ones to his supposed, ay, or his known, false ones? If God has acted, it would be kinder, and in every way better, to call attention to the truth, that He has acted, because having done so once, He may be expected to do so again.

Again, why does Sir Robert desire to explain these cures, "on natural principles"? Scripture certainly gives ground for expecting miraculous cures. Why should anyone try to find that apparently (or seemingly—to use his own words) miraculous cures are not what they seem? Granted, for the sake of argument, that they may be explained on natural

principles, it must also be granted that they can be explained in accordance with Scripture. Why, then, should one seek to *set aside the Scriptural* probability, in order to admit the natural? If Sir Robert were found among the enemies of the Word of God, no one would wonder, but it is strange to see him supplying those enemies with so strong an argument as this, that even Sir Robert Anderson prefers to explain on natural principles what Scripture gives reason to expect miraculously. And he makes this preference, although he knows that he is *exposing to ridicule*, and contradicting, many earnest, devoted servants of God?

The answer to these questions seems to be that the vast majority of the religious leaders of men have their eyes turned away *from the living God*, and from the unseen things, and fixed on the things that are seen, and thus their vision is beclouded as to the things of God, and their ears have "become dull of hearing" (Heb. v. 11) as to His Voice. It cannot be truly said of the Church to-day that she walks "by faith, *not* by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7); the order is inverted, and *we walk by sight*, not by faith.

There are several matters touched on by Sir Robert Anderson in the book under review, such as "Spiritual Wreckage due to Failures," "The Divine Will," "Mind-healing and Will Power," and "Hezekiah's Prayer," which might fall to be discussed here; but as such a discussion is beyond the scope of this essay, while the subjects seem to demand consideration, it has been thought better to deal with them in an appendix.

A little time now devoted to the proof, which exists in abundance, that God does, even in these days of unbelief, show Himself the same faithful, promise-keeping God which His Word leads us to believe He is, and which in the old times He showed Himself to be, may be serviceable to some of His afflicted children, even though it may not remove the general air and attitude of unbelief in which so many christians are living. And while dealing with to-day, it will be well to remember the evidence already shown as to His dealings up to the days of Wesley.

The story of Dorothea Trüdel is well known, although perhaps not so well known as it should be, and the tendency

of teachers in these days is to hide such a story. There is room for only a short notice here of this devoted woman, and the sketch here inserted is taken from the work of a gentleman who cannot be said to be biased in favour of the idea of God's intervention in human affairs. The very heading of the chapter of his work from which this extract is taken, "Some Modern Faith-healers,"* proves his *lack of knowledge*, and his tendency to attribute the work to human agency. He says, "During the past quarter of a century"—his book is dated 1890—"several persons have acquired celebrity in connection with faith-cures. One of the best known of these was a worker in flowers, named Dorothea Trüdel. She resided in the little Swiss village of Mannedorf. When she was about thirty-seven years of age, four or five working people living in the house of one of her relatives fell ill. Their malady resisted all treatment. One day the words of James v. 14, 15, flashed into her mind—after experiencing deep agitation, she prayed for the sufferers. They recovered; other invalids heard of it, and sought an interest in her prayers. Her leisure was soon entirely occupied, persons from a distance heard of her success, and came to her. From France, Germany, and even Great Britain, invalids flocked to Mannedorf. She was compelled to arrange for their accommodation. *The doctors grew furious;* the matter was brought before the Law Courts. In the course of the trial evidence was given of hundreds *of authenticated cases* of cure. One had been healed of a stiff knee, which had been treated in vain by the best physicians in France, Germany, and Switzerland. A leading physician of Wurtemberg gave evidence of the restoration of one of his own patients, whose case he had regarded as hopeless. Testimony was given at various times to the healing of cancer, fever, epilepsy, and insanity. Men of the ability and standing of Tholuck and Von Kapff carefully examined Miss Trüdel's work, and expressed their confidence of its genuineness."

These are facts as seen by one who knew little or nothing of the power of God, for he never in his book refers to that

* Gliddon: *Faith-cures, their History and Mystery*, pp. 89, 90.

power. He is discussing the question from *a purely human point of view*. Miss Trüdel did not speak of *her* work, and Tholuck spoke as she did of the *work of God*, done through her agency, but Gliddon's evidence on the facts is, nevertheless, valuable for that very reason.

A few more facts, however, will help. Dorothea had the advantage of being taught by a mother whose godliness made her remarkable. Many a time she had learned, in her adversity, the power of a faithful God. She had looked to Him for food for her family when they were starving, and she found that He did not fail her. She had trusted Him for healing her children in their sickness, and He had heard her prayer, *and delivered them* from death, and Dorothea grew up under the care of such a mother as this. Thanks be to God for mothers such as she was, who can train their children to believe God.

This is how Dorothea herself tells the story of the four people who fell ill. She tells us that they all summoned a doctor, but they got worse after taking the medicine. Then she says, "I went as a worm to the Lord and laid our distress before Him. I told Him how willingly I would send for an elder, as is commanded in James v., but as there was not one, I must go to my sick ones *in the faith of the Canaanitish woman*, and, without trusting to any virtue in my hand, I would lay it upon them. I did so, and by the Lord's blessing, all four recovered. Most powerfully, then," she goes on to say, "did the *sin of disobeying* God's Word strike me, and most vividly did the simple life of the carrying out just what God ordered stand out before me."

Just a few more words from her: "In the New Testament we are called kings and priests. Power accompanied the anointing of the kings, and if we really belonged to the kingly priesthood, shall not strength to heal the sick by prayer come on us also, through the anointing of the Spirit? If we only wear our Levite dress, and are consecrated in soul and body—if we are only prepared to be vessels of His grace—it is *His part* to bless. Oh, that we were willing not to do more than God would have us do, then would that day be one of great reviving to us."

The facts of this simple woman's life are so well established that they cannot be successfully denied. In the Name of the Lord, and in *the power of His might*, she wrought, and God gave the blessing, as He says He will. If anyone desires to know the truth about her, the book of her story can be had. It is called *Dorothea Trüdel, or the Prayer of Faith*, published by Morgan & Scott. She lived in the middle and latter half of the nineteenth century.

Dr. Boardman, author of *The Higher Christian Life*, *Gladness in Jesus*, *He that Overcometh*, and several other works, gives, in his little book intituled *The Lord that Healeth Thee*, a list of several cases, and many personal testimonies to God's faithfulness in healing sickness in answer to prayer. Among others, a letter by Lord Radstock, whose name as an honoured and much-used evangelist will long be remembered in Britain, in which he says, "There have been many instances (in Stockholm) of God's gracious healing." . . . "God has not withdrawn the promise in James v. 15." . . . "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

But the book itself should be read by all who really and honestly want to know the truth on this important subject. The *list of sicknesses* healed includes consumption, disease of the lungs caused through a violent cold, which was accompanied by loss of voice and almost constant expectoration, with fever; bodily deformity; curvature of the spine; congestion of the lungs, with fever and delirium; and the effects of sunstroke.

Dr. Cullis, of Boston, and Miss Carrie Judd, bear testimony to similar cases of healing; Captain R. Kelso Carter, who was for twenty years professor in the Pennsylvania Military College, gives several instances, of which one must suffice.

Of this case he says, "Only the merest outline of this case can be given here. Liquor was the cause of the trouble. Some time in 1875 this lady was attacked because she would not deny *her religious convictions*, and most horribly injured She was choked into insensibility, her back broken, the right hip and shoulder dislocated, the bones of the legs broken, and her whole body covered with terrible bruises. In this condition, when the merest spark of life remained, after being examined by several physicians, who refused to attempt to do

anything for her, she was raised up *by the power of God alone*, and walked, besides using her right hand in signing her name within twenty-four hours after the injuries were inflicted. Many of her friends and acquaintances near Cincinatti, Ohio, were, and are, familiar with all these facts, and *medical testimony* was given, and on oath, concerning her injured condition.

I am personally acquainted with the lady, and have had the privilege of meeting with several of her intimate friends. The evidence in the case is full, clear, and voluminous."

Of course someone will say, "This is an extreme case." Well, perhaps it is, but *are there extreme cases with God?* and if He will heal the extreme case, what hinders Him from doing the same with the common? This case was chosen because it is an extreme case, of which it is impossible to say that it was a case of mimetic or hysterical disease. Carter gives other cases of which the same can be said, but there is no room here for more.

The author of a little work called *Irish Methodist Reminiscences* gives two instances of God's intervention in answer to prayer. He is not writing in support of the truth of Divine healing. Indeed, he does not seem to know that the question was even then—1889—agitating the minds of many christians. He just *simply relates his experiences.* The first is an account of the healing of the principal character in his book, Samuel Nicholson. He says, "A bilious fever prostrated him . . . soon, two medical men pronounced his case hopeless. Men *who had power with God*, however, visited him, and when they heard the report of the doctors, they appointed a meeting for special intercession on his behalf. *God heard the prayer*, and the fever fled."

The other was a case of a gentleman (unnamed) who lay seriously ill. The doctors had given strict orders that no strangers should be allowed to enter the sick chamber. Permission having been obtained, Mr. Nicholson spent a short time only in the room, and some time after he had left it, he was walking with a friend, when he suddenly stopped, stood still, his face beaming with a joyous satisfaction, and in tones of strongest confidence he exclaimed . . . "that man shall not die, for *God has heard my prayer* just now, and given me the

assurance that he will recover." To the surprise of the doctors, the man did recover, and for many years thereafter lived a godly, consistent life.

Yet another little work of the same character, but detailing the work of a servant of God in Norfolk Island and New Zealand, called *Gathering Jewels*, and being really a short record of the work of a Methodist Evangelist, gives several instances of healing. At page 32 are these words, "*Confirmed invalids* were healed by Divine power, God working mightily, even by signs and wonders as of old, through the Name of His Holy Child Jesus"; at page 117, "We found Brother B—— with a high fever, seemingly a very sick man. . . . I knelt at once by his bedside, and asked God to rebuke the fever and heal him, and when I arose, I laid my hands on him in the Name of the Lord, and the power of healing came on him. After a while we left him and went to bed. In the morning I prayed for God to strengthen him, so that he could attend the 'all days' we were to hold on the 'Old Camp Grounds.'" In this he was not disappointed, for Brother B. was there, and the Evangelist, Mr. A. H. Phelps, says, "I was not surprised one bit to see him able to be out."

At page 138 he says, "I was taken suddenly with a hemorrhage of the lungs for the first time in my life; I think the cause of this was a severe cold taken soon after we came here, when I got so wet going to Church, and could not but go forward, with damp clothing, all that evening . . . at last I felt so much better, we all retired for the night, *trusting in Him Who can heal both body and soul*, and in the Blood that cleanseth us from all sin. This morning we are over all our fright . . . so trusting in the Divine Healer, we dare go forward."

At page 217, "Sister Goldsworthy took Christ as her Healer; I anointed her with oil in the Name of the Lord We all prayed, and the Lord was present to bless and to heal. This was a *disease of twenty years' standing*, but praise His Name for His power to heal. It was thorough work, and the disease never troubled her again."

At page 280 there is another recorded instance, this time of rheumatism, and on page 281 he says, "We witnessed

many, many cases of healing by the Lord Jesus in answer to prayer."

At page 284 he records a *case of heart disease* healed. This must suffice for this little book, which teems with proof that God is not silent now, and all this occurred only from twenty-five to twenty-eight years ago.

Dr. Arthur T. Pierson, well known in America and Britain, after referring to several authenticated cases of healing through the power of God in answer to prayer, in an essay which he has written on the subject of Divine healing, says, "Dr. A. J. Gordon, of Boston, a man conservative in doctrine, and peculiarly free from extravagance and inaccuracy of statement, told me that he had become personally acquainted with cases of God's healing in answer to prayer, that he could *no more dispute* than his own existence," and then he goes on to give in detail the facts of a case of healing of cancer in the jaw. Dr. Gordon followed the directions given in James v. 14, 15, and he says the jaw entirely healed, not a trace of the cancer could after a few weeks be found, and even the teeth, which had been loosened, were again held tightly in their sockets.

Time and space alike forbid more than a passing reference to the great work now being done under the wise supervision of Dr. A. B. Simpson, at 8th Avenue, New York, and Nyack, on the Hudson River, but the work undertaken in this little essay would be poorly done if he were not mentioned, for it is not too much to say that God is using him and his consecrated coadjutors mightily in this very work; and there are many scores of people who can gladly give their testimony, that *they and others have been healed* of serious diseases, which were neither mimetic nor hysterical. Many other testimonies might be added which have been given by consecrated men and women to facts known to themselves, which can only be accounted for by the truth that God does heal diseases which are neither mimetic nor hysterical, in answer to prayer, and is *no respecter of persons.*

Now, how are these witnesses to be dealt with? They are men and women of unimpeached—not to say unimpeachable—character! The most of them stand high

among the christian men and women of the present age, their word is taken on every other subject. They pass for men and women of sound judgment. They knew the circumstances of which they wrote and spoke. How shall we treat them? There are only two ways in which they can be honestly treated. The first is to believe them, but if anyone finds he cannot, he should suspend his judgment until he knows whether the testimonies are true or false; but the weight of evidence is in their favour, and the burden of proof is shifted, and now lies with those who deny the truth of their statements.

Sir Robert Anderson says, "The difficuly is not the occurrence of miracles, but their absence," and this cloud of witnesses tells him that his difficulty *does not exist*, and that in the words of so saintly a man as George Müller, of Bristol, "God is still the Living God, and to-day, as well as thousands of years ago, He listens to the prayers of His children, and helps those who trust Him."

And yet, although these things are being done in many places to-day, the attitude of the great majority of christian people to this question is one of determined unbelief, or what may be considered almost a worst thing than that—utter indifference. The mighty men, the so-called leaders of men, and of the Churches, steadfastly disbelieve and lead their followers with them in their disbelief. Such a man as Dr. Theodore Cuyler could write scoffingly of the proof that was offered him that healings were being wrought through a man who was named to him; and that without even taking the trouble to make any inquiries. Another Doctor of Divinity, when asked, "If I were to tell you that I had been healed of severe heart disease, what would you say?" answered without hesitation, "If you are well now, I would not believe you ever had that disease, and if you had it, I will not believe that you are well." And these two men represent the attitude of mind of the overwhelming majority of even christians. Alas, that the spirit of unbelief should have obtained such a hold upon men, even converted men! God's Word contains the promises in such form as should lead to a simple expectation of their fulfilment; and many of God's servants say they have

proved them true; and yet these leaders refuse to believe, ay, and prevent others believing.

How can God bless as He would? It is the same old story, history repeating itself. The wise, the learned, the great, the influential, disbelieve God; and He cannot manifest Himself. Again we seem to hear the solemn words, "God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions," and the words often appearing above may be again repeated here. "At the beginning, God endowed man with freedom of will and power of choice, and He has always respected and He still respects that freedom of will." But man has been given a choice between God and man as healer; and again man has chosen *against God.*

Before closing, it may be well to see how a mighty man of God of these latter days felt concerning what he saw with regard to another phase of this subject. A few of his words have been already quoted (p. 135), but a few more quotations of his own words may perhaps convey light on more than one truth. George Müller, of Bristol, in relating the causes which led him to establish an orphan house, says, "I had constantly cases brought before me which proved that one of the special things which the children of God needed in our day was to have their faith strengthened," and after giving one or two examples of the state of mind toward God which he had seen among christians, he says, "I longed, therefore, to have something to point the brother to as a *visible proof* that our God and Father is the same faithful God as ever He was: as willing as ever He was to prove Himself to be the *Living God* in our day as formerly *to all who put their trust in Him.*"

Again, speaking of other examples, he says, "To this class likewise I desired to show by a *visible proof* that God is unchangeably the same." Yet again, "My spirit longed to be instrumental in strengthening their faith by giving them not only instances from the Word of God . . . but to show them by proofs that He is the same in our day. I well knew that the Word of God ought to be enough, and it was by grace enough to me, but still I considered that I ought to lend a helping hand to my brethren, if by any means by this visible proof to the unchangeable faithfulness of the Lord I might

strengthen their hands in God"; and again, "I therefore judged myself bound to be the servant of the Church of God in the particular point on which I had obtained mercy in being able to take God by His Word and to rely upon it." . . . "Now if I, a poor man, simply by prayer and faith obtained without asking any individual the means for carrying on an orphan house, there would be something which, with the Lord's blessing, might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God. . . . This, then, was the primary reason for establishing the orphan house . . . the first and primary object of the work was (and still is) that God might be magnified by the fact that the orphans under my care are provided with all they need only by prayer and faith, without any one being asked by me or my fellow labourers, whereby it might be seen that God is faithful still and hears prayer still."*

The story of George Müller's life and of the way in which the needs of his orphan houses were met for more than sixty years, and of the way in which he waited for, and heard, and obeyed God's Voice, and the facts which that story unfolds are of themselves enough to prove that God is not silent; and yet, strange though it may seem, christians who should be as eager as George Müller was to magnify the Name of the Lord, read that story, and find pleasure in it, but fail to take to themselves the lesson which God wants to teach them by it.

The story of Dr. J. G. Paton, too, in the South Sea Islands has caused a thrill of joy in many a christian's heart, but alas! few, if any, have learned the lesson which that story was intended to teach: That God is a Living God, a Faithful God, a Promise-keeping God, in our day, as in the past days and that He is not silent.

But because men have been taught otherwise, their ears "have grown dull of hearing."

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* *George Müller, of Bristol*, by A. T. Pierson, App. E.

CHAPTER XVII.

RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION.

So far as the record shows, no such promises were given to the men of the early dispensations as were given to the Church. There was no promise nor any prospect of enduement with power from on High,* and this fact, and the expression and repetition of such promises in the revelation to, and with respect to, the Church, make it clear that the Church was intended by the Lord to possess, and did possess in manifestation, powers and privileges which even the saints of the old time did not possess. That she does not possess these powers to-day, or if she does possess them, that they are latent, is a truth; and this truth casts upon the Church the burden of inquiring why she does not possess them, or if she does possess them, why they are not in exercise or manifest. It is not enough to say that God has withdrawn them. This, if true, should be proved, but if it is untrue, the fact that it has been said should cause the cheeks to burn with shame; for God has been misrepresented.

It is well known that our limbs and certain other organs of our bodies will by disuse become atrophied; and our spiritual organism, too, will be found responsive to the same law. May it not be that for want of use the spiritual powers have decayed?

Adam walked with God till he fell. Enoch and Noah walked with God after the Fall. Abraham talked with God, and God revealed Himself and some of His purposes to him after the Fall. Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, and all the prophets had communion with God, but to no one of

* This does not mean that Old Testament Saints had not power from from on high, but that the Old Testament does not contain such explicit promises of enduement as the New Testament contains.

all these was it ever said as it was said of the Church, "The Comforter . . . the Spirit of truth . . . dwelleth with you, and shall be *in you*" (John xiv. 16, 17). David and the other prophets looked forward to the coming glory (1 Pet. i. 10, 12), but the most ever said of them was that the Spirit of the Lord came upon them. Solomon saw the Church in a vision, and spoke of her as "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song of Sol. vi. 10).

Isaiah, Ezekiel, and some of the other prophets, had visions of a coming glory, a glory which was to be revealed—they had glimpses of a coming King, Redeemer and suffering sin-bearer, and they had also dim visions of a glory connected with the Church, but they themselves were surrounded by much spiritual darkness. Isaiah wrote almost in the closing years of Judah's existence as a nation before the captivity. Ezekiel had his visions by the River Chebar, in the enemy's land; yet even they could see something which Peter calls "the glory which should follow."

Isaiah saw the King of the new Kingdom, and wrote of "Emmanuel," God with us, and Joel foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit, but they only saw things afar off, and were not themselves partakers of the glory. The Church alone was entitled to this glory, and to the power and fellowship which are all included in the facts revealed in the word "Emmanuel," and in the fact that the Holy Spirit has come.

And yet the history of these men shines out of the Sacred Record with a wonderful clearness; and as we read, we forget the darkness around them; we forget that they were the lights shining in a dark place; and are inclined to think that they were representatives of their compatriots at least, if not of the whole world, and to suppose that the powers which they possessed were characteristic of their age, and that the testimony which they bore was listened to, and also borne by, the great multitudes around them.

Of course, when the subject is calmly considered, such thoughts disappear; but it is seldom calmly considered, and our vague thoughts are permitted to remain undisturbed, and to mould our opinions; for it must be admitted that many of our most cherished opinions are only prejudices formed by

unconsidered, unanalysed ideas—and thus men think and speak of the days of the prophets, as if they were the days in which the Lord manifested His power among men generally. But they were not. The prophets were among the despised and hated ones. Time and again efforts were made to stifle their voices, and even in Israel and Judah their message was contemned, while beyond the narrow confines of Israel it was not even known that the prophets of the Lord existed at all. These prophets were the Voice of Jehovah, and the Lord has taken care to preserve their words; but those words then were, as the words of God's prophets to-day are, unheeded and unheard by the majority of men.

In contrast to all this, let us see what God intended His Church to be. "Fair as the moon," as Solomon said. "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." God dwelling in her (John xiv. 17, 23; 1 Cor. ii. 12; iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16, and other places), Emmanuel, God with us, her Master and Lord, The Holy Spirit, her teacher and leader and her strength. Contrasting the old dispensation with the new, Paul calls the old "the ministration of condemnation" and "the ministration of death," while the new he calls "the ministration of the Spirit" and "the ministration of righteousness," and speaking with reference to the glory of the first, he says the second "exceeds in glory." He calls it "the glory that excelleth," and says that it is "much more glorious." Those are God's thoughts of the Church. And when we remember what it was in which this glory consisted, power—power from on High—not earthly or worldly influence, not the wisdom of men;* not popularity, not numbers, but power from on High, and when we withdraw our thoughts from this glory, God's ideal glory for His Church, and gaze on the state of the Church to-day, and find her not only not possessed of this power from on High, but giving reasons—plausible enough, no doubt, but unscriptural—why she has them not nor expects them, we are constrained to cry, "How has the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed?"

* 2 Cor. ii. *passim*.

Surely, in these days, when we have the joy of knowing that "Emmanuel" really means "*God with us*," now that the Holy Spirit is indeed come and dwelling in us—in us, that is, of course, in those who are indeed "in Christ," as Paul expresses it (Rom. viii. 1, and other places), we should look for brighter times and greater powers than the old saints and prophets possessed, instead of less. And if the Voice of God could be and was heard by these men in the midst of the sin and estrangement from God of those dark days of old, it is not too much to expect that at least men should be better able and more willing to hear that Voice to-day.

Is this too much for God to expect? A calm study of this question will produce the answer, No, it is not too much for God to expect; but immediately upon the utterance of that answer will follow the sad admission that it has proved too much in actual experience.

It is not infrequently said by those who speak and write on the Coming of the Lord and kindred eschatological topics that there is good reason to believe that the miraculous powers which were in exercise in the Church in the early days, will again be manifest in the latter days before the Return of the Master, and they say that that Return is imminent now. Yet with strange inconsistency many of the very men who speak thus, are prepared to deny and refuse to examine the evidence offered them that these powers are in exercise among those who believe.

What shall we say then? That because man has failed it is proved that God meant him to fail? Rather let us say, while grieving over the failure, that we shall search the Word of God to discover the cause of the failure, and shall turn from the cause and seek the Lord with full purpose of heart.

APPENDIX.

Note 1.—Spiritual Wreckage due to Failures.

Sir Robert Anderson says (page 171): "The annals of 'faith-healing,' as it is called, are rich in cases of mimetic or hysterical disease, but about the spiritual wreckage due to failures innumerable, they are silent." A much juster way of putting what he wants to say would be, "Those who report cases of healing through the Divine power"—or, better still, "through the direct operation of God in answer to prayer—say but little or nothing about the failures due to spiritual wreckage"; for that that is the case will be shown immediately. First, then, Who is it that fails? This is a serious question, and one which will not brook evasion, and it will be best elucidated by asking, Who is it not? It cannot be the one who never tries. He neither succeeds nor fails. It cannot be the one who never professes nor offers to heal. And the servant of God, who goes in His Name, and obeys His Word, and asks and expects God to work, never tries to heal, and never professes nor offers to do so. He sees God's Word as it is in Mark, "These signs shall follow them that believe; In My Name . . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." "In My Name," says the loving, mighty Healer, Jesus (Whose Name, by-the-by, I have seen in an old Low German Testament translated "The Healer"), "In My Name"—not in your own strength or wisdom, but "in My Name."

What does this mean? Peter, speaking to the Jews about the healing of the impotent man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, said, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (Acts iii. 12); and a little later he says, "Be it known unto you all, and to all

the people of Israel, that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole" (Acts iv. 10).

The servant of God, knowing this, and knowing that God has promised to answer prayer, and knowing also, it may well be, his own weakness, laying hold on the promise, asks that God will heal. Or, he may take the word he finds in James v. 14-16, "Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil *in the Name of the Lord*"—still in that mighty Name—"and the prayer of faith shall save—heal—him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up"—not they shall raise him up, but the Lord—and being called, he goes, and in obedience to the word, he prays, "having anointed him," as the word really is—and believing God, he expects, but he does not heal, nor try, nor profess, nor offer to heal—he expects *the Lord* to raise him up.

Now, who is it who fails? Not the elder, as in James, nor those who believe, as in Mark. Who then? There are two others concerned. One is the sufferer. Sir Robert will hardly say that it is he who fails, for he does not heal himself. Who, then, is left, for there are only three persons concerned, and God is the other. Is it He Who fails? One is almost shocked at the mere asking of the question, and yet this is the logical result: God's Scripture contains promises which in form at least justify us in believing that He will do certain things, and it contains nothing to warn us that He does not mean what those promises say, and we know He did act in the old time as if He meant to do as He promised, and by so doing He led us to believe that He would continue so to do, and now we are told that He does not. True, we are given a reason, but this reason needs a mighty, trained intellect to discover it, and in any case, the result is that we are assured that God does not "do as He has said," and as His Book leads us to believe He would. This is the result of Sir Robert's argument. I do not believe for a moment that he means it.

Men and women who are engaged in this work know too

well that the failures, of which there are altogether too many, are caused by the wreckage of the faith of the great multitude of christians, who, having listened too long to those who follow the example of the Serpent in Eden, have imbibed the unwholesome teaching that God has changed, and does not now act as He did in the old times. It is such teaching as this which has caused the spiritual wreckage, which in its turn causes the failures. Scientific questionings and reasonings create doubts, and these generally crystalise into settled unbelief, and unbelief or disbelief of God's Word makes man unable to receive His blessing, and even to hear when He speaks, though He may speak as with thunder.

Note 2.—Mind-Healing and Christian Science.

On page 170, Sir Robert Anderson says, "Others"—other cures than those of the mimetic and hysterical diseases he had just spoken of—(see *supra* p. 142)—"Others, again, may be explained as instances of the power of the mind and will over the body," and he goes on to say that the progress of disease may be controlled or even checked by some mastering influence or emotion which turns the patient's thoughts back to life, and makes him believe he is convalescent. This, of course, is said with a view to support strongly his contention that God seldom—if ever—interferes to heal disease, and it might be left without further reply than that found in the text. But as mind-healing is the essential element in Christian Science, a note on that movement will not be out of place, although Sir Robert Anderson does not mention it by name. This movement may perhaps have taken its name on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, for it is neither christian nor science. Its basic teaching is—There is no sin. There is no pain. There is no sickness, nor evil. All is good. Good is God, therefore all is God. Perhaps the formula is not expressed so tersely as this, but it is clearly taught.

So-called Christian Science healing consists in a series of denials and affirmations, and the method of healing adopted is to induce the sufferers to believe these denials and affir-

mations. This is just a form of mind-healing, and, when successful, shows the power of the mind over the body. Testimonies abound to the effect that many have been so healed, and it is hardly wise, in the absence of proof, to charge all these witnesses with a conspiracy of deceit. The testimonies may be true. Who can tell the power of the human mind? And if they are true, why should anyone object to or ridicule them? Or why should anyone desire to have them prohibited? Then they may be untrue, but it is not scientific to say so without proof; although it must be admitted that this latter method is the one commonly adopted by those who have not the time, or perhaps the inclination, to make the necessary inquiry. But this leaves the question of the accuracy or otherwise of the affirmations and denials untouched. Is there no sin? Then, the Christ, Who "died for our sins, according to the Scriptures," "Who His own self bare our sins in His own Body on the Tree," did not exist, and the very foundation truth of the Gospel is removed. So this theory is not christian. And science proves, and we all know too well, that there is sin in the world, with all its attendant and consequent misery and sorrow, and so the so-called Christian Science is not science. But to confuse Christian Science with Divine healing, or "faith-healing," if you like it better, as is done by many, or to fail to distinguish between them, is to betray a want of acquaintance with both. Again and again have the teachers of Divine healing pointed out the great difference between the two lines of teaching. And in at least one book on Christian Science, of which I possess a copy, several important distinctions are made between Christian Science and "faith-healing" as it is called,* and it is not too much to say that they are absolutely opposed to each other.

* *Christian Science Healing*, by Frances Lord, a well known leader of the movement.

Note 3.—The Will of God (p. 206).

No christian can approach this subject without experiencing a feeling of his own insufficiency to deal with it. So immense is the subject, so awe-inspiring, that one feels that even the highest created mind is unfit adequately to discuss it, and one thing is clear, even if everything else is doubtful, and it is that to speculate or guess about the Will of God is dangerous in the extreme. And if our guesses or speculations about the Will of God lead us to conclusions which God's Word does not justify, it is also clear that they are leading us astray.

Now let us contrast two passages from the work under review. "The Word of God is our guide, and not the experience of fellow christians, and when this is ignored, the practical consequences are disastrous" (p. 171). Splendid thought, well expressed. But let us turn to the other. "I can . . . but plead with the thoughtful reader to consider whether every word addressed to the apostles is intended to apply to all believers at all times. Take John xiv. 12 as a test of this. Is every believer to be endowed with miraculous powers, equal to or greater than those exercised by the Lord Himself? We are prepared at once to limit the scope of these words. Is it so clear, then, that the words which immediately follow are of universal application? We have the fact, I repeat, that both these promises were proved to be true in the Pentecostal Church, and that neither has been proved to be true in the Christian Church?" (p. 205). Are we not justified in asking what guide is being followed now? Is it the Word of God, or the experience of fellow christians?

Clearly we should not, nor indeed can we, judge God's Will by the experience of christians; and it will be well if the readers of Sir Robert's book will take the position which he himself insists is the right one, and follow the Word of God only, in doing which they will refuse to follow him when he places the experience of christians in opposition thereto.

How, then, can we discover what is God's Will? It is the boast of Protestant Churches that the Bible is the revealed Will of God. In it, then, we should find that Will. Do we

so find it, or can we know it? A text or two will show. Matt. vii. 21, "Not everyone who saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the Will of My Father Which is in heaven." Matt. xii. 50, "For whosoever shall *do* the Will of My Father Which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." Mark iii. 35, "For whosoever shall *do* the Will of God the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." The Lord Jesus would not, and we may well say did not, require men to *do* that which they could not know. Eph. i. 9, the Apostle tells us that God has "made known unto us the mystery of His Will," and in Col. i. 9, he prays that the Colossians may "be filled with the knowledge of His Will."

Again, in Eph. v. 17, he urges them to "understand what the Will of the Lord is," and yet again, the same Apostle in Col. iv. 12, tells them of Epaphras, who prays for them, that they "may stand perfect and complete (or fully assured) in all the Will of God." There can, then, be no doubt that it appears from the Word that men can and ought to know that Will, that it is not a dark inscrutable mystery, but a rule of life, and this being so, it is only reasonable to believe that in that revelation which God has given, we shall find that Will, and therefore if we find clear statements of duty or clear promises on God's part, we are justified in believing that it is His Will that we should do what He requires, and that He will do as He has said.

If we take this position we shall find it easy; but there will be no room for the speculations or guesses of the wise and the learned. This is the position for the obedient and trustful, and the history of God's people all through the ages shows that He hears and answers those who thus learn and do His Will. It may be, and doubtless is, true that no one who has ever been on the earth, save the Blessed Lord Jesus Himself, has known God's Will thoroughly; but certainly he who is desirous of learning and obeying it will know more of it, and submit to it more heartily, than the one who says that it cannot be known, or who opposes his own judgment to the Word which reveals it.

Note 4.—Hezekiah's Prayer.

Sir Robert Anderson says (p. 207), "It is a solemn thing to make unconditioned demands upon God. To the record of such prayers may often be added the solemn words, 'He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. Hezekiah prayed in this way. He claimed a prolongation of his life, and God granted his petition, and the added years gave him his son Manasseh, and the consequences of Manasseh's sin (which God would not pardon) still rest as a blight and a curse upon that nation." And it is a solemn thing, it may also be said, to tear a passage of Scripture from its setting and quote it without the context, when that context explains it. The passage above copied is only part of the psalmist's statement about Israel in the wilderness. The context, after showing God's deliverance, goes on to say, "Then believed they His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel: but *lusted exceedingly* in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psa. cvi. 12-15). The careful Bible student will not forget the incidents referred to, the murmurings and expressed disbelief. Listen: "Would that we had died by the Hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill the whole assembly with hunger" (Exodus xvi. 3).

This is only one of the scenes of murmuring and rebellion of which Israel was guilty, although they had the visible manifestation of the presence of God with them, and although His Hand had been stretched out for their deliverance. Surely such circumstances as these have no parallel in the case of a christian asking from God something which he knows he needs. But if a christian sees in God's Word such promises as have already been quoted, and has no knowledge of that fine high criticism which has discovered that God does not mean what He says; that He once did, but has ceased to do, what He has promised; can this christian be deemed

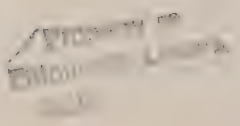
guilty of the solemn thing so deprecated if he takes God at His word?

But about Hezekiah's prayer. It is remarkable that we do not find the Lord blaming him for his prayer; indeed, but for the information we have received in modern days outside of God's Word, we would actually have believed that God approved of the prayer. There was no need for any intense earnestness beyond the weeping. The words were simple, and God's answer was speedy and full. He even condescended to send a special messenger to communicate His Will to Hezekiah, and in His message He calls him the prince of His people. There is not a sign of any unwillingness to grant the petition, but all the evidence points in the opposite direction. Now, here is the picture we are invited to consider. A man is dying. It is well he should die, because if he does not, he will have a son who had better not be born. He does not know this, but God does. He asks God to prolong his life; and God, knowing that it is better he should die, and that the nation will suffer if he lives, yields to the man's prayer, does what He knows He ought not to do, and entails the blight and curse upon the nation He loves. Upon whom does the blame rest? Upon Hezekiah? No, he did not know. He only did what was reasonable and natural. Upon whom, then? Is not the thought horrible, that man should charge God with wrong-doing? But that is just what is done by the passage now being considered. One's hand almost refuses to put such words upon the paper, but when such statements are made, those who make them must expect to have them analysed. Thank God! the picture is not a true one. God heard the cry of His trusting child, as He hears their cry now, and He delivered.

Note 5.—Testimony of Mr. G. Soltau.

Since the above was written, but before it was sent to press, I have had the privilege of reading a little tract written by Mr. George Soltau, who some ten or eleven years ago visited New Zealand, and gave some most interesting and valuable

addresses on various aspects of the christian life. I had then the pleasure of making his acquaintance, and I listened with much profit to many of his addresses, and I particularly remember that he felt and spoke strongly against what was and is still frequently called "faith-healing." In this little tract, however, Mr. Soltau himself tells out some wonderful experiences which he has had in America. He says, among other things, that God "has raised up a witness to His power and truth, in the person of a Dr. Yoakum, who has simply abandoned himself to God in the salvation of body and soul of drunkards, consumptives, and insane persons. Thirteen years ago he was himself saved from death (after one lung had sloughed away and the other was half gone) by anointing and laying on of hands, and has since been in perfect health, with two good sound lungs. Long before that he was most famous for discoveries in the use of X-rays, and had wonderful cures of cancer and lupus through the administration of this treatment. But as he told me," says Mr. Soltau, "he has seen far more wonderful cures in answer to prayer and anointing, and so his apparatus lies locked up and unused; while his rooms are thronged with patients seeking help and prayer." Further on he says, "Since the days of Dorothea Trüdel, of Switzerland, I suppose there has been nothing like it." Perhaps in this latter remark Mr. Soltau is wrong. I think so, but his testimony is none the less valuable, and one is glad to find a man who can change his opinion.



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